COMBAT AIRCRAFT 154

Martin Streetly

WILDE SAU NIGHTFIGHTERS

SERIES EDITOR TONY HOLMES

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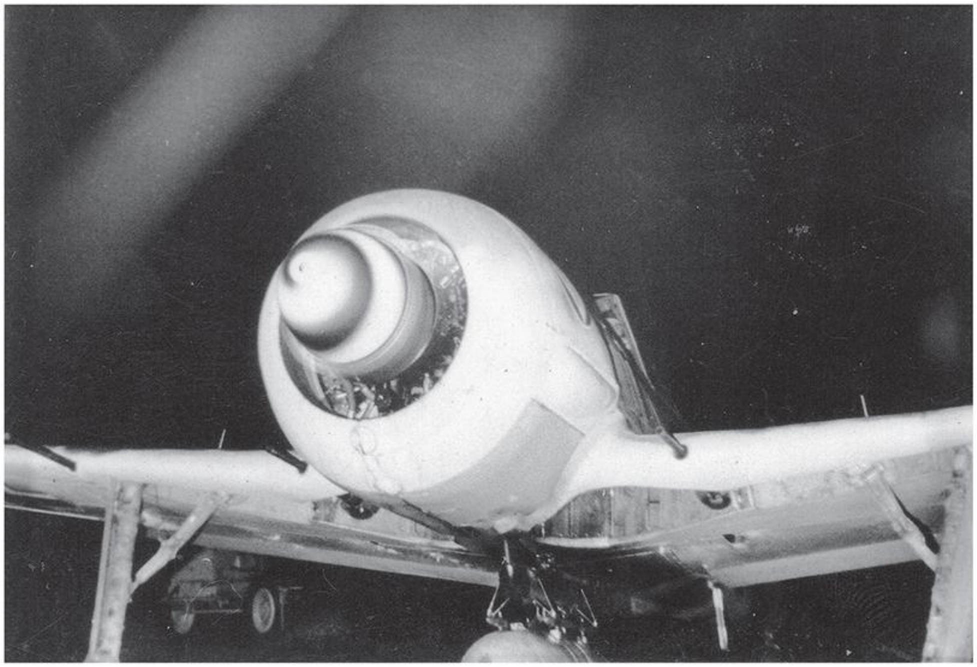

Dedication

Sue, 1951–2019.

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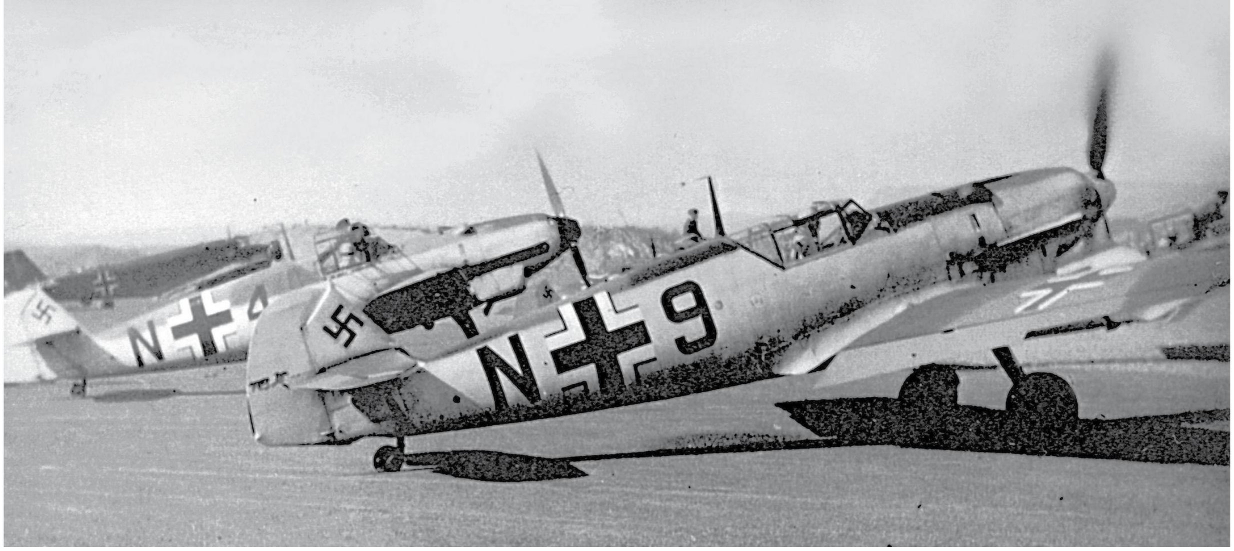
CHAPTER ONE

PRECURSORS

During 1939, the Luftwaffe began to supplement the *Reich'*s night defences (which rested primarily with the service's ground-based anti-aircraft artillery (*Flak*) and searchlight batteries) with a small number of *Nachtjäger* (nightfighter) *Staffeln* (squadrons). These new units were equipped with a mixture of Ar 68 and early model Bf 109 single-seat fighters. To-date, six such *Staffeln* have been identified, designated as 10.(*Nacht*)/*Jagdgeschwader* (Fighter Wing, JG) 2, 10.(N)/JG 26, 10.(N)/JG 72, 10.(N)/JG 131, 11.(N)/*Lehrgeschwader* (Demonstration Wing, LG) 2 and 10.(N)/*Zerstörgeschwader* (Heavy Fighter Wing, ZG) 26).



These 11.(N)/JG 2 Bf 109D-1 fighters were photographed while operating in Norway during the spring and summer of 1940 (*EN Archive*)

Of these units, 10.(N)/JG 2 was formed from 10.(N)/JG 131 at Döberitz on 1 May 1939 and was subsequently equipped with nine Bf 109s at Fürstenwalde at the beginning of September. For its part, 10.(N)/JG 26 was formed from 11.(N)/LG 2 at Bonn-Hangelar on 1 September 1939 (at which time, it was equipped with nine Bf 109Ds), while Ar 68F-equipped 10.(N)/JG 72 was formed at Mannheim-Sandhofen under the command of Oberleutnant Ernst Boenigk on 15 July 1939. Here, the original 11.(N)/LG 2 had been created at Griefswald under the command of future day fighter ace

Oberleutnant Johannes Steinhoff in May–June 1939, at which time it was equipped with a mixture of Ar 68Fs and Bf 109Ds. Previously, Steinhoff had commanded LG 1's provisional *Nachtjagdstaffel*, and he went on to lead 10.(N)/JG 26 when 11.(N)/LG 2 was so re-designated. The remaining unit, 10.(N)/ZG 26, came into being on 5 September 1939 under the command of Oberleutnant Bernhard Mielke, and like 11.(N)/LG 2, it flew a mixture of Ar 68Fs and Bf 109Ds.

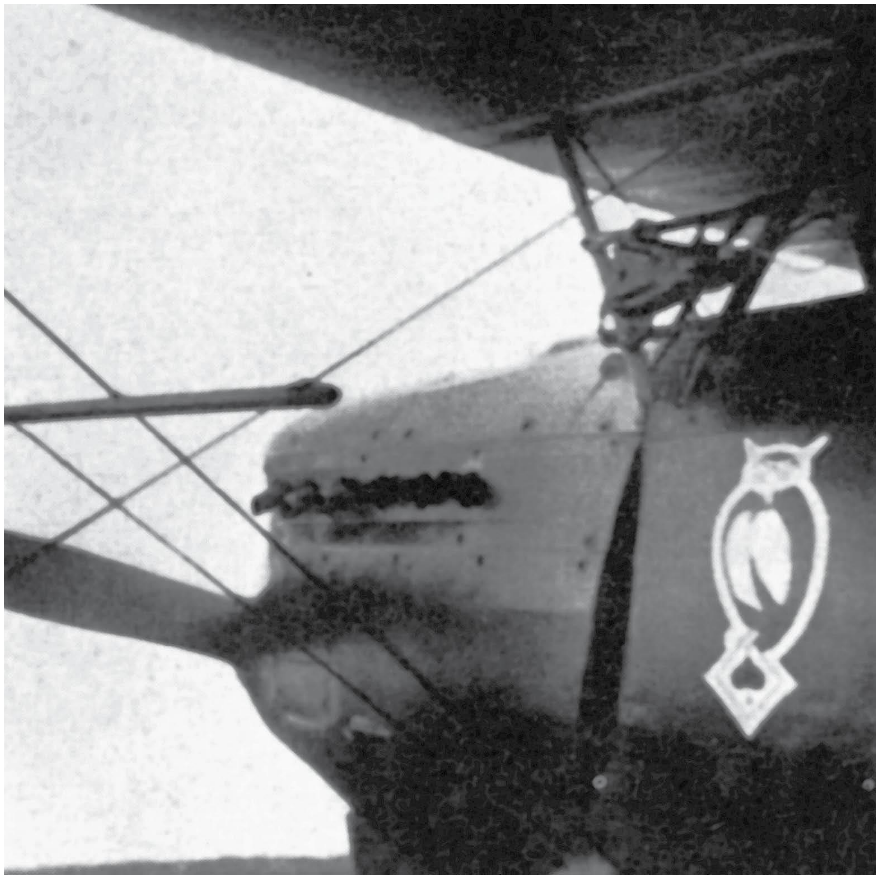
All these units were intended to perform dawn and dusk patrols as well as night-time interceptions, with the latter being made with the aid of searchlights. At this stage of the fighting, the Luftwaffe's searchlight batteries were equipped with the 150 cm *Scheinwerfer* (search light, Sw.) 34 and Sw.37, together with the 60 cm Sw.36. Of these, the Sw.34 could illuminate a target at altitudes of up to 12,000 m when pointing vertically upwards, while the Sw.36 could reach targets that were flying at an altitude of 1500 m at a range of up to five kilometres. For its part, the Sw.37 could light up targets at 15,000 m when vertically aligned.

While both the Sw.34 and Sw.37 could reach the altitudes at which Royal Air Force (RAF) Bomber Command frontline types were operating, their effectiveness declined rapidly when conditions were cloudy or hazy. Furthermore, the relatively high speed of the latest generation of night bombers meant that their illumination was often too brief for the achievement of a successful fighter interception. Indeed, there seems to be no evidence for ANY 'illuminated nightfighting' successes until 1940, and then only four victories (a Battle, two Hampdens and a Wellington) were attributed to single-seat nightfighters during the five months between February and June 1940. The inherent difficulties in 'illuminated nightfighting' would go on to plague the *Wilde Sau* (literally wild sow, but usually translated as wild boar) units three years later.

For the rest of 1939 and the early months of 1940, the 'N' *Staffeln* remained as singular units. With the turn of the year and the development of a wider Luftwaffe nightfighter arm, a number of these individual *Staffeln* were grouped together as the fourth *Nachtjäger Gruppe* of JG 2 (IV.(N)/JG 2), which was stood-up under Hauptmann Albert Blumensaat at Jever on 3 February 1940.

For the Luftwaffe, single-seat nightfighting was always a dangerous activity from its inception. This Ar 68F from 10.(N)/JG 72 was written-off in a crash in southwest Germany in 1940 (*EN Archive*)

Within this new arrangement (which, according to one source, was under the operational control of Oberstleutnant Wilhelm Fichter who was variously the commander of *Flak Regiment* 118 and *Flakschweinwerfer* (Anti-Aircraft Searchlight) *Regimen*t 1), 10.(N)/JG 2 retained its original designation, while 10.(N)/JG 26 (which had amalgamated with 10.(N)/ZG 26 on 5 January 1940) and 10.(N)/JG 72 became 11.(N) and 12.(N)/JG 2, respectively. Of these, 11.(N)/JG 2 was under the command of Oberleutnant Erwin Bacsilla, while 12.(N)/JG 2 was led by Oberleutnant Hans Baer. The re-organisation was completed by the creation of a *Gruppe Stab* (staff), and the unit survived until 22 June 1940, when it was re-designated II./*Nachtjagdgeschwader* (Nightfighter Wing, NJG) 1, equipped with Bf 109Ds and transferred to Amsterdam-Schipol. On 1 July 1940, II./NJG 1 became III./NJG 1 and moved to Düsseldorf under the command of Hauptmann Conrad von Bothmer.

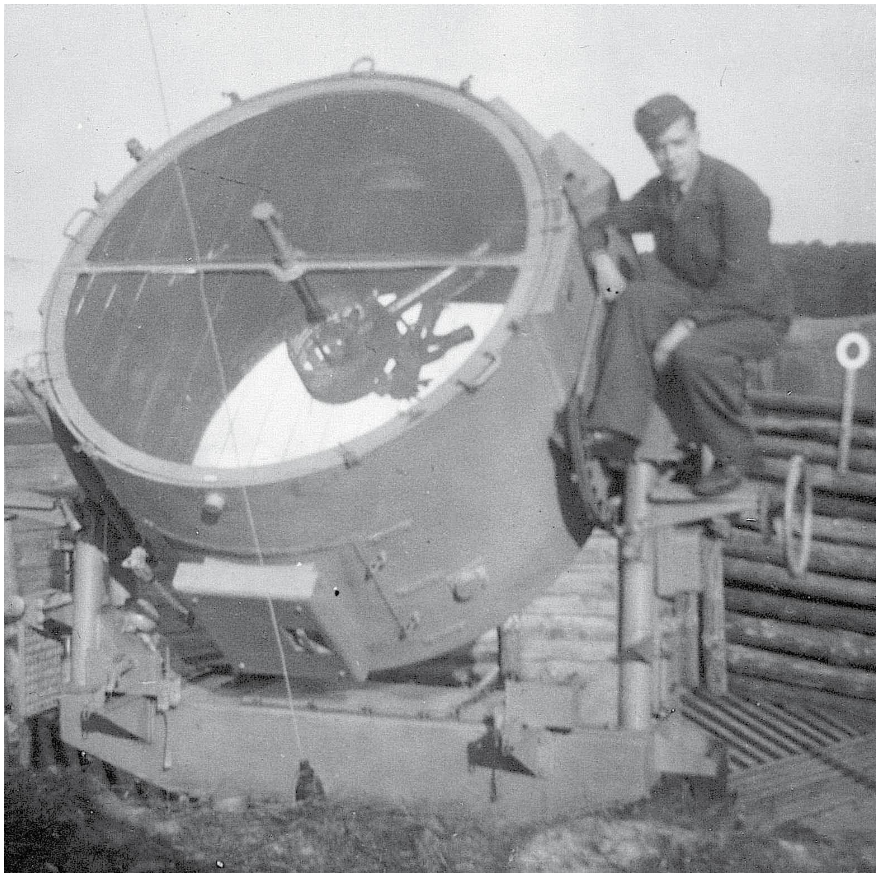


A close-up of 10.(N)/JG 72's *Staffel* symbol applied to an Ar 68F nightfighter. The use of the 'Ace of Spades' for the black and white owl's perch has led to this heraldry being associated with JG 53, who, as far as is known, did not have a component *nacht Staffel*. Recent research does indeed suggest that the insignia is that of 10.(N)/JG 72 (*EN Archive*)

This final re-designation came at a time when it had been realised that multi-engined, multi-crew aircraft were better suited to the nightfighter role than single-seaters, where, amongst other things, pilot workload was judged to be too great for successful operations. Indeed, III./NJG 1 had begun to convert from the Bf 109E to the Bf 110 during August 1940, and by the following October, Bf 109E-equipped 10. and 11./NJG 1 had been amalgamated to form the *verstärke* (strengthened) *Jagdstaffel Holland*, which went on to become the day-fighting *Staffel* 1./JG 1.

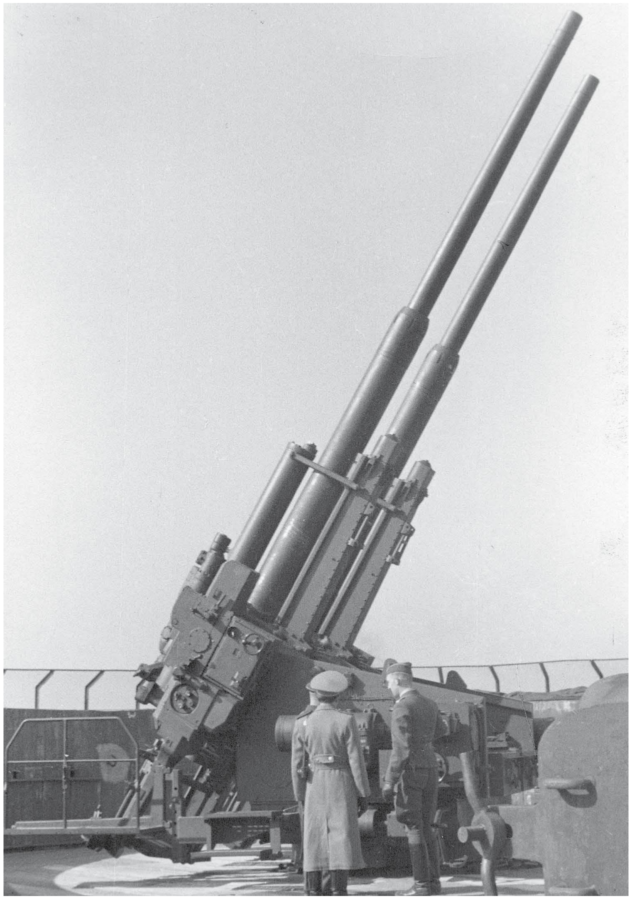
Some of 10./NJG 1's Bf 109Es appear to have remained as nightfighters (as part of III./NJG 1) into 1941, however, for in May of that year seven were logged as having been operational in the role. Indeed, pilots flying these aircraft attempted 'illuminated nightfighting' from Köln-Ostheim, Bonn-Hangelar, Duisburg and Eelde. Their singular lack of success heralded the end of this first period of single-seat nightfighting during the autumn of 1941.

While the Luftwaffe's mainstream nightfighter arm switched over to twin-engined aircraft such as the Bf 110, Do 17 and the Ju 88, autumn 1941 did not signal the demise of the Luftwaffe's interest in single-seat nightfighters. In this context (and when under interrogation during August 1945), Major G S Sandemann, the last Air Tactics Officer of the Air Defence Section of the *Oberkommando der Luftwaffe* (Luftwaffe High Command, OKL) stated that, 'The demand for a single-engined fighter especially constructed for use with searchlights was repeated again and again [during the war years], even after the He 112 had failed at the beginning of the war'.



Central to the effective employment of single-seat nightfighters was searchlight illumination of targets. During World War 2, the Luftwaffe deployed four main types of searchlight – the 150 cm Sw.34 and Sw.37, the 60 cm Sw.36 and the 200 cm Sw.43. This particular example is an Sw.37, which could light up targets at 15,000 m when vertically aligned (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Alongside this long-standing desire for an effective single-engined nightfighter, the Luftwaffe's flair for improvisation threw up several instances of re-roled single-seat fighters and fighter-bomber aircraft being used at various time as ‘auxiliary’ nightfighters.



This pair of 10.5 cm Flak 38/39 weapons could fire a 27 kg shell to an altitude of 9450 m. By late 1944, 2018 such guns were in service (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Chronologically, the first of these appears to have been the use of II. and III./JG 54’s Bf 109Fs as ‘bright’ nightfighters over the Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) front during the summer of 1942. Operations began in June, and took the form of standing patrols over the Volkhov River area to the east and south of Leningrad, together with *freie jagd* (free hunt) fighter sweeps between Tschudowo and Novgorod. The primary targets for these missions were Soviet transport aircraft attempting to re-supply the besieged city and its defenders, with guidance being provided by ground controllers who are said to have had access to a *Freya* air surveillance radar.

So tasked, the two *Gruppen* claimed to have destroyed 58 enemy aircraft at night between 7–8 June and 2–3 August 1942. As was the case during the

Wilde Sau period, these successes resulted from a number of factors (guidance from the ground, good visibility and the availability of individual pilots who had a flair for nightfighting) that remained constant throughout the war. Reinforcing the point concerning innate pilot ability, no fewer than 47 of these victories were claimed by just five pilots – Oberleutnant Günther Fink (8./JG 54) with eight, Leutnant Hans-Joachim Heyer (8./JG 54) with six, Leutnant Erwin Leykauf (8./JG 54) with eight, Hauptmann Reinhard Seiler (*Stab* III./JG 54) with 12 and Hauptmann Joachim Wandel (5./JG 54) with 13. This instinctive skill on the part of a select number of pilots was to be seen again and again in the Luftwaffe's *Wilde Sau* operations.

Elsewhere (and as the *Wilde Sau* concept was being born and developed), further examples of such re-roling saw single-seaters from JG 2, *Schnellkampfgeschwader* (Fast Bomber Wing, SKG) 10, NJG 3/JG 11 and, of all things, the maritime patrol unit *Seeaufklärungsgruppe* (Sea Reconnaissance *Gruppe*, SAGr) 128 being used as temporary nightfighters.

In order, 22 July 1943 saw the Fw 190A-equipped 2./JG 2 being despatched to Tours for a two-week-long blind flying course in order to create a night-flying capable *Staffel* within JG 2 that would bolster the Luftwaffe's nightfighter resources in France. After completing its training, the *Staffel* transferred to Saint-André-de-l'Eure in Normandy on 7 August 1943 and generated its first nightfighter sortie on 9–10 August. Two nights later, 2./JG 2 was scrambled again, and during the course of a 1 hr 48 min engagement, Unteroffizier Ernst Petretti and Leutnant Detlef Großfuss claimed the destruction of three Halifax bombers.

One of JG 54's night aces following the mid-1942 campaign was Leutnant Erwin Leykauf, who claimed eight victories between 14–26 June patrolling at low altitude on moonlit nights. He downed six Soviet aircraft in just one hour on the night of 22–23 June (*Tony Holmes Collection*)

From then on until November, 2./JG 2 was credited with the destruction of a further 14 RAF bombers (six Lancasters, five Halifaxes, two Stirlings and a '4-motor') on the nights of 15–16 and 16–17 August, 11–12 and 15–16 November. In the two latter instances, Unteroffizieren Herbert Frass and Werner Edelmann are reported to have shot down three Halifaxes between them on the night of 11–12 November, with Frass adding a fourth three nights later.

Another of JG 54's night aces was Hauptmann Reinhard Seiler, who had been appointed *Kommandeur* of III./JG 54 on 1 October 1941. During more than 500 combat missions, Seiler was credited with 109 aerial victories, of which 16 were claimed at night in June 1942 and nine had been achieved over Spain in 1937–38 while he was serving with the *Legion Condor* (*Tony Holmes Collection*)

Alongside its *Wilde Sau*-style nightfighting activities, JG 2 also appears to have been the vehicle for the initial evaluation of the Fw 190A fighter fitted with *Neptun* airborne intercept (AI) radar. This effort is reported to have begun at the instigation of Oberstleutnant Gordon Gollob (in his capacity as *Jagdfliegerführer* (Fighter Leader) 5), who hoped the combination would create an effective all-weather fighter.

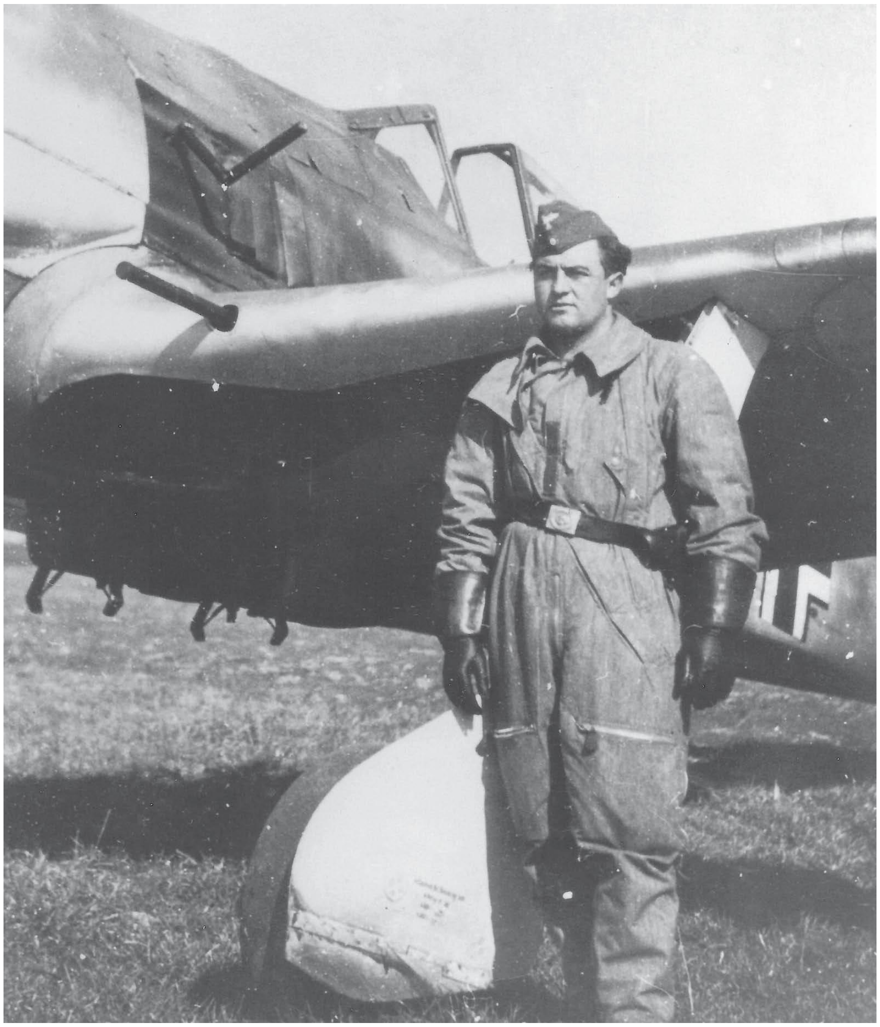
As a result, a detachment of five *Neptun*-equipped Fw 190s (possibly designated as *Kommando Bretschneider*) was established at Conches-en-

Ouche in Normandy, and according to a Focke-Wulf report of January 1944, showed the Fw 190/*Neptun* combination to be capable of ‘identifying enemy aircraft even in the worst weather conditions and without reference to ground control’. The report went on to note that the combination was responsible for the destruction of eight ‘Boeings’, presumed to be a reference to the B-17 Flying Fortress bomber.

The success of the effort also brought it to the attention of Major Hans-Joachim ‘Hajo’ Herrmann, who saw the Fw 190/*Neptun* combination as a potentially useful tool for *Moskito-Jagd*. His interest, combined with concerns about the aircraft’s security so close to the Channel coast of France, led to the programme being moved back to Germany. JG 300 received its first Fw 190 fitted with *Neptun* radar on 30 December 1943, and by February 1944, six such aircraft were available (see **Chapter Five**).

JG 2’s 1943 bad-weather and nocturnal activities did not stop at its second *Staffel* and the described *Neptun* trial, with Fw 190A-equipped 8./JG 2’s Oberleutnant Friedrich May, Unteroffizier Fritz Schuler and Gefreiter Egon Hess each claiming a Lancaster during a dual operation with 1./SAGr 128 on the night of 12–13 July. For its part (and at the time), SAGr 128 was equipped with a mixture of Fw 190A fighters and Ar 196A-3 floatplanes, with three of the former (flown by Oberleutnant Heinz Wurm and Oberfeldwebel Hans Gryz and Oberfeldwebel Friedrich Jost) claiming a further five Halifax bombers during the operation.

For its part, the Fw 190F/G fighter-bombers of SKG 10’s first and third *Staffeln* became involved in *Wilde Sau* type operations between May and July 1944. On the nights of 3–4 May and 4–5 July, seven of its pilots claimed a total of 13 bombers (five ‘4-motors’ and eight Lancasters) destroyed. Top scorers were 3./SKG 10’s Feldwebel Otto Heinrich (three ‘4-motors’ and a Lancaster) and Oberleutnant Helmut Eberspächer (three Lancasters). The *Geschwader*’s other successful pilots came from both its first and third *Staffeln*.



Feldwebel Otto Heinrich of 3./SKG 10 was credited with three ‘4-motors’ and a Lancaster destroyed. He failed to return from a combat sortie on 22 May 1944, his aircraft having crashed in the English Channel (*Chris Goss Collection*)

The remaining cited units (NJG 3 and JG 11) became involved in *Wilde Sau* style nightfighting during late 1943 when 10./NJG 3’s then *Staffelkapitän*, Oberleutnant Hans-Hermann Müller, attempted to borrow a number of Fw 190As from 10./JG 11 in order to form a *Nachtjagdkommando* (Nightfighter Flight) that was to be used to intercept British aircraft making night courier flights between Scotland and Sweden. Having been refused such a loan, Müller turned to 2. *Jagddivision*, which agreed to supply him with an Fw 190A-5 (which was marked up as D5+XV) and instructed JG 11 to loan him a pair of Fw 190A-4s (re-coded as D5+YV and D5+ZV). When the expected success of this venture was not forthcoming, the *Kommando* was disbanded and its aircraft returned to their original owners during February–March 1944.

Undaunted, JG 11 took up the challenge, and on 13 May 1944 formed its own Aaborg-West based *Alarmstaffel Aalborg* (Alarm Squadron Aalborg) to take over from NJG 3's disbanded *Kommando*. Using Fw 190As drawn from its tenth and eleventh *Staffeln,* the *Alarmstaffel* proved just as unsuccessful as its predecessor had been in stopping these 'Stockholm Run' flights – a lack of success that led to its disbandment during late June 1944.

From the foregoing, it should be clear that the *Wilde Sau* concept was firmly rooted in doctrine that had been evolving within the Luftwaffe since 1939. While not wholly original, what the technique brought to the table was a high degree of sophistication and availability 'at the right time in the right place' when the night defence of the *Reich* was in crisis during the summer of 1943.

10./NJG 3 operated three Fw 190As in an attempt to interdict British nocturnal 'Stockholm Run' courier flights between Scotland and Sweden. Shown here is the *Staffel* 's Fw 190A-5 D5+XV, which was supplied to 10./NJG 3 by 2.*Jagddivision* (*EN Archive*)

CHAPTER TWO

COMETH THE HOUR, COMETH THE MAN

In the *Wilde Sau* story, one name (that of the concept's originator Hans-Joachim 'Hajo' Herrmann) stands above all others. By way of background, 9 July 1942 saw the then Hauptmann Herrmann being transferred from III./KG 30 (where he had been the *Gruppe*'s *Kommandeur*) to the Luftwaffe's *Luftwaffenführungsstab* (Air Force Command Staff) as the occupant of the *Stab*'s technical and tactical development section's 'bomber desk' – a position he used to develop his concept of *Wilde Sau* nightfighting.

Oberst Han-Joachim 'Hajo' Herrmann acquired much of his authority via his personal relationship with the Luftwaffe's Commander-in-Chief, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, who is seen here inspecting (in the company of Herrmann) personnel from JGs 301 and 302 in November 1943 (*Chris Goss Collection*)

A former policeman and infantry officer, Herrmann was born in Kiel on 1 August 1913 and joined the Luftwaffe on his 22nd birthday in 1935. Trained as a bomber pilot, he was posted to 9./KG 253 in the summer of 1936, before being sent to Spain as part of the *Legion Condor* in August of that year. Herrmann remained in Spain until April 1937, and was promoted to Oberleutnant on 1 June 1938. Initially serving with 7./KG 4, he became 7./KG 30's *Staffelkapitän* on 10 November 1940. Whilst still serving with the latter unit, he and his crew bombed and sank the freighter *Clan Fraser* at its berth at Piraeus, near Athens, on 6–7 April 1941. The detonation of the ship's 250-ton cargo of explosives obliterated it, destroyed much of the port of Piraeus and sank a further ten ships that were berthed around the vessel.

Following his transfer to the *Luftwaffenführungsstab*, Herrmann went on to become the acting *Kommodore* of *Jagdgeschwader Herrmann*/JG 300 (see following). Wounded in action on 5–6 September 1943, he was appointed commander of 30.*Jagddivision* on 26 September, only to be wounded again on 12 October (when he belly-landed an Me 210A-1 near Paris). Finally, in December, he was appointed *Inspekteur der Nachjagd*. Thereafter, Herrmann became the commander of *9.Fliegerdivision (Jagd)* on 6 February 1945 and surrendered to Soviet forces on 11 May.

Ex-bomber pilot Oberst Hans-Joachim 'Hajo' Herrmann was the driving force behind the *Wilde Sau* concept. Closely associated with NSDAP ideology, he survived the war and long years of

Soviet imprisonment to become a lawyer who was involved in Far Right politics in post-war West Germany (*Chris Goss Collection*)

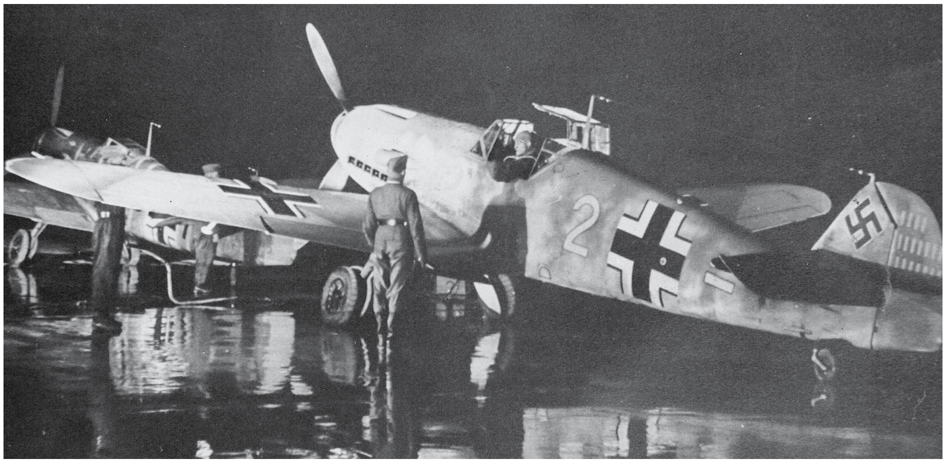
While undoubtedly a brave man, Herrmann was something of a difficult and abrasive personality. As a policeman, he is likely to have at least been associated with (if not a member of) Hitler's *Nationalsozialistiche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist Workers Party, NSDAP), whose concepts of Aryan military honour and sacrifice he espoused. This mindset caused him to drive his *Wilde Sau* pilots hard, with little concern for their safety, and which is best illustrated by one of his 'orders of the day' and his association with *Sonderkommando Elbe*, which was intended to bring down enemy bombers by the simple expedient of ramming them.

Regarding his *Wilde Sau* pilots, Herrmann is reported to have stated that, 'Your job is to destroy enemy bombers, and the safety of your own aircraft is secondary to that. Remain in the air as long as there is a chance of shooting down a bomber. If you run out of fuel, if you get lost or cannot find an airfield, abandon your machine and take to your parachutes, rather than attempt a crash landing'.

In the course of his wartime service, Herrmann claimed nine aerial victories (one confirmed) and the sinking of 65,000 gross registered tons of shipping. He was released from Soviet captivity in October 1955 and went on to study law in Düsseldorf. Post-war, Herrmann never lost his wartime ideals and became a staunch advocate of Germany's military veterans, whom he felt were being airbrushed out of history by West German society. As a lawyer, he defended Neo-Nazis and 'Holocaust deniers' (including the British historian and author David Irving) and was active in Far-Right politics. Herrmann lived until he was 97, passing away in Düsseldorf on 5 November 2010.

By his own account, Herrmann's *Wilde Sau* concept was rooted in his staff work, which convinced him of the growing danger posed by the disparity between British and American bomber production and the number of fighters (particularly nightfighters) Germany was able to build and field against them. To bridge this gap, Herrmann proposed a drastic reduction in Germany's production of bombers, enhanced fighter construction, the development of multi-role single-seaters (that could serve as day/nightfighters and as fighter-bombers) and the augmentation of the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighter force with existing day fighters that would be used during both daylight hours and at night.

While the depth of Herrmann's knowledge of the Luftwaffe's previous (and, indeed, continuing) use of 'cat's eye' nightfighters is not clear, such operations must have had some impact on his thinking, as he envisaged the use of searchlights and other visual aids for both navigation and interception. What was most significant about his proposals was their use of generic day fighters rather than specialised single-seat nightfighters, and the introduction of mobility instead of tying the interceptors to fixed zones of operation and/or a specific ground-controlled interception (GCI) sites.



Wilde Sau operations were a godsend to the *Reich*'s propaganda ministry – a factor that generated a number of posed 'action' photographs for the press. An interesting example (in that it appears to feature Bf 109Fs of a unit other than JG 54, which was the only *Jagdgeschwader* to utilise the F-model in the nightfighter role) is shown here (*Chris Goss Collection*)

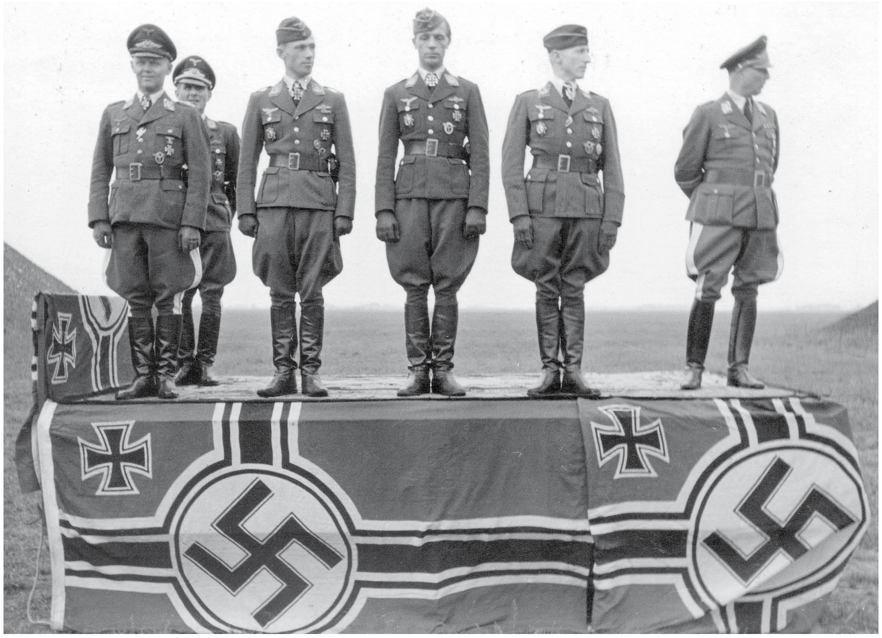
Thus, his *Wilde Sau* fighters would fly a day shift before becoming nocturnal hunters, and would carry drop tanks to extend their range so that they could attack the enemy wherever he might be found. Equally, they would attack the enemy bombers over their targets (subsequently termed *Objektnachtjagd* (target area nightfighting)), where they would be illuminated not only by searchlights and flares but by their own target markers and the fires they were creating in Germany's cities.

Herrmann is understood to have first put his proposal to the Luftwaffe's nightfighter staff at a meeting in November 1942, where it received a lukewarm (if not outright hostile) response. Undeterred, he managed to persuade the powers-that-be to let him carry out a series of nocturnal experimental flights from Berlin-Staaken in March 1943, during which he flew an Fw 190A against an He 111 'target'. Having satisfied himself that the

Wilde Sau technique was possible, he agitated to be allowed to carry out a 'live' sortie against an RAF Bomber Command raid. Permission for this was granted and on (it is believed) 20–21 April 1943, he managed to come within firing range of a Mosquito over Berlin.

That Herrmann saw the sortie as unsuccessful was due to his being blinded by the flash of his own guns and their daylight tracer rounds, which caused him to lose sight of his quarry. Further difficulties were caused by his inability to reach an agreement with Generaloberst Hubert Weise (the *Luftwaffenbefehlshaber Mitte* – Luftwaffe's Air Force Commander for central Germany) with regard to restricting *Flak* fire to a 6000 m ceiling, so that he could operate safely above that altitude.

While this sortie showed that *Wilde Sau* could be made to work in the real world, it also demonstrated (even at this early stage) that fighters used in the role would have to have at least some specific modifications (drop tanks, muzzle shrouds, dim night tracers and the like), and that agreement concerning the creation of a *Flak* ceiling was vital if the *Wilde Sau* fighters were not to be shot out of the sky by 'friendly fire'. Indeed, the Fw 190 used by Herrmann for this 'live' test arrived back with *Flak* damage to its fuselage.



General der Flieger Josef Kammhuber (at far left on the reviewing stand) is rightly considered as the 'father' of the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighter arm. In this photograph, taken on 1 July 1942, Kammhuber is presiding over the award of a Knight's Cross to nightfighter ace Ludwig Becker (second from the right) following his 25th victory (*Chris Goss Collection*)

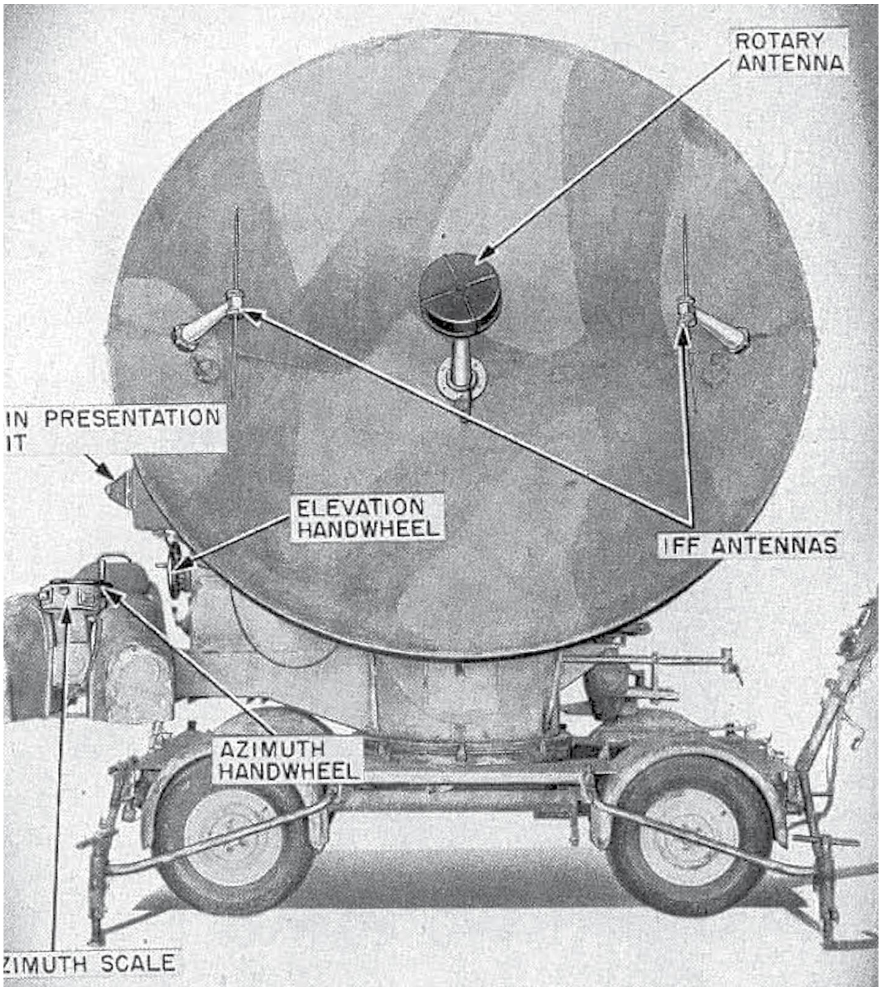
Alongside this initial *Wilde Sau* sortie, Herrmann began to recruit volunteers to staff a *Nachtjagdversuchskommando* (nightfighter trials unit, NJVK) that was established at Brandenburg-Briest on 22 April 1943. Equipped with a mixture of Bf 109G and Fw 190A fighters (including one Fw 190 that was fitted with an infrared spotlight as a means of identifying itself to *Flak* batteries), the *Kommando* became fully operational during the first week of May 1943.

In more detail, the 4th of the month saw the NJVK fielding two Bf 109G-6s and 12 Fw 190As (the unit's 'preferred' type) at Brandenburg-Briest, together with two more Fw 190As at Berlin-Staaken for Herrmann's personal use. Six days later, another conference was convened to try and sort out the *Flak* ceiling problem. On the night of 13–14 May, the now operational *Kommando* managed to intercept a pair of Mosquitos, one of which (identified as a '4-motor') was claimed as having been damaged by the unit's Feldwebel Eberhard Brandt. Three nights later, the *Kommando* was again in action, with the month ending with claims for the destruction of a pair of Halifaxes by Brandt and Feldwebel Otto Hofer on the night of 29–30 May.

On 4 June the NJVK (now with an establishment of ten pilots) re-located to Mönchengladbach, with the night of 11–12 June seeing the *Kommando*'s Oberfeldwebel Heinz Lönnecker claiming to have destroyed a Lancaster and an enemy twin-engined aircraft. The following night, the NJVK 'made visual' contact with enemy bombers during a raid on Bochum. Throughout the rest of June, the *Kommando* flew sporadic operational sorties, and it was not until 3–4 July that it achieved any real success. On this night, seven pilots (including Herrmann himself) claimed the destruction of a Halifax, a Lancaster, a Stirling and four '4-motors'. Three of these claims were contested by the *Flak* arm, with a fourth being declared *Anerkennung spatter möglich* (confirmation (of victory) possible at a later date, ASM).

While the NJVK had been finding its feet, a considerable amount of politicking had been going on in the background. In the first instance, May 1943 had seen *General der Flieger* (General of Airmen) Josef Kammhuber's proposal to expand his conventional nightfighter force to meet the growing threat from RAF Bomber Command vetoed by Hitler, while Herrmann had reinforced his personal link with the Luftwaffe's Commander-in-Chief, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, during a discussion concerning nightfighting on the 18th. Thereafter, 26 June saw the OKL issue an order to create a single-engined nightfighter *Geschwader* that was to comprise a *Stab* and three three-*Staffeln Gruppen*, with a total establishment of 110 aircraft.

Now pushing at an open door, Herrmann was ordered to the Luftwaffe's 'Robinson' headquarters at Berchtesgaden on 4 July to report on the events of the previous night – a meeting from which he came away as the *Kommodore* of the first *Wilde Sau Geschwader*, JG *Herrmann*. Alongside this, *Blindflugschule* (Blind Flying School) 10, which had been formed at Altenburg on 10 May 1943, was brought into the fold to teach new *Wilde Sau* pilots the art of night and bad weather flying. Subsequently, *Blindflugschule* 10 was re-designated JG 110 on 15 October 1943.



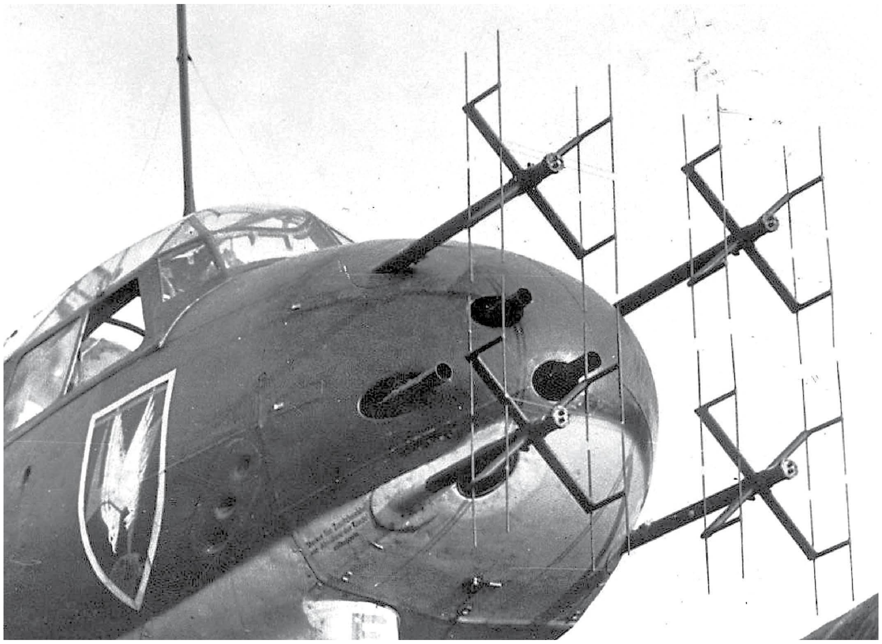
When the RAF first used its *Window* radar countermeasure on the night of 24–25 July 1943, its main target was the ground-based *Würzburg* fire-control radar that was fielded by the Luftwaffe as a *Flak* and searchlight control tool and as a component of its GCI system. Shown here is an annotated view of the front of a *Würzburg D* radar on its limber taken from a contemporary Allied identification manual (*Author's Collection*)

While the NJVK's reported successes were gradually increasing, they came at a cost. During the period May to July 1943, it lost one unspecified Fw 190A, one Fw 190A-4 and two Fw 190A-5s, with one pilot (Oberfeldwebel Otto Hofer) being killed. As with many other aspects of the *Wilde Sau* construct, heavy losses in men and machines were evident at a very early stage of its development.

With JG *Herrmann* established, 22 July 1943 saw the *Geschwader*'s first *Gruppe* (under Major Willy Gutsche) based at Bonn-Hangelar and II./JG *Herrmann* (under Major Kurt Kettner) at Rheine alongside its 'buddy' unit II./JG 1, whose Fw 190s its 21 pilots were to fly. For its part, I./JG *Herrmann* could muster 38 Bf 109G-6s. Two days later, III./JG *Herrmann* (under Major Hans-Joachim von Buchwaldt) arrived at Oldenburg, from where it was to share III./JG 11's Bf 109Gs. By the end of the month, the new *Geschwader* had received a total of 60 aircraft, eight of which (all Fw 190As) were assigned to its *Stab*, eight (again, all Fw 190As) to II./JG *Herrmann* and 44 (all Bf 109Gs) to its third *Gruppe*.

In the broader scheme of things, 24–25 July 1943 was a pivotal moment for both the nascent *Wilde Sau* organisation and the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighter force. On this date, RAF Bomber Command used its *Window* radio countermeasure for the first time during a raid on Hamburg. Taking the form of strips of foil cut to half the wavelength of a target radar, each *Window* strip resonated when it was illuminated by a radar of the right frequency, thereby generating multiple responses on the target radar's display which obscured the real target 'blip'.

The *Window* used on this first Hamburg raid was aimed at the Würzburg fire-control and GCI radar, and (fortuitously) proved to be equally effective against the Luftwaffe's FuG 202 *Lichtenstein* BC airborne intercept (AI) radar. At a stroke, the RAF had thrown the Luftwaffe's carefully constructed GCI system and its airborne radar component into near chaos, leaving a defensive hole that JG *Herrmann* and its *Wilde Sau* tactic was able to fill in the short term.



The FuG 202/212 AI radar (the antenna array for which is shown here) was fatally compromised for use in western Europe when the RAF first employed the *Window* radar countermeasure during July 1943. The use of *Window* led to the virtual abandonment of the radar-based GCI system that had been built up by *General der Flieger* Kammhuber – a situation that did much to promote the *Wilde Sau* construct (*Chris Goss Collection*)

It should be stressed that the *Window* effect was not terminal for the night defence of the *Reich*, but was rather a disrupter that could be worked around given sufficient time to develop and deploy suitable equipment and tactics. That various work-arounds did emerge in relatively short order is evidenced by the growing success the conventional, AI radar-reliant, *Nachtjagdverband* (nightfighter arm) achieved during the first six months of 1944.

In the immediate aftermath of the Hamburg raid, Herrmann was telephoned by Göring, who reaffirmed his confidence in the *Wilde Sau* technique and urged him to bring JG *Herrmann* to full operational readiness as soon as possible. While by no means completely ready, JG *Herrmann* was able to scramble 28 fighters from its first and second *Gruppen* on the night of 25–26 July.

Between this date and 17–18 August, the *Geschwader* went on to claim the destruction of no fewer than 93 enemy aircraft on seven nights – 25–26 (raid on Essen), 27–28 (Hamburg), 29–30 (Hamburg) and 30–31 July (Remscheld), and 2–3 (Hamburg), 10–11 (Nürnberg) and 17–18 August (Peenemünde). Of this number, three were classed as having been ‘brought under effective fire’, 18 were classified as being ASM, one was rejected outright, one was classed as being both *Vernichtung Nicht Erwiesen* (destruction not proven, VNE) and ASM, nine were confirmed and one was a Mosquito. The latter aircraft, Mosquito B IV DZ379 of No 139 Sqn, was brought down by Unteroffizier Edmund Rajzner on the night of 17–18 August. Thereafter, a second Mosquito was claimed by Feldwebel Werner Hakenjoos on the 20th. Whether or not Hakenjoos' victory was claimed during a daylight engagement is not clear.

While this total was impressive, it was not without cost. Between 3–4 July and 17–18 August, the *Geschwader* had ten pilots killed (four as a result of combat, with the remainder falling in training accidents), with aircraft lost or damaged standing at 18 and 13 during July and August, respectively. Digging down, the July aircraft loss figure included 12 complete write-offs, and comprised 11 Bf 109Gs and seven Fw 190As, of which six were JG 1 aircraft and one belonged to JG 11. Of the August figure, six were write-offs, with ten being Bf 109Gs and three Fw 190As, and three aircraft came from JG 1 and two belonged to JG 11.

As the *Reich*'s defences grew in strength, the night sky over Germany became one of both great danger (for friend and foe alike) and macabre beauty as it was punctuated by *Flak* bursts, 'fighter' flares, target markers and searchlights. Such a scene is shown here in this long-exposure photograph (*Chris Goss Collection*)

On 20 August 1943, JG *Herrmann* was re-designated JG 300. The 'new' *Geschwader* flew three additional missions (on 23–24 and 27–28 August and 31 August–1 September against raids on Berlin, Nürnberg and Berlin, again, respectively) during which its pilots claimed to have shot down 30 enemy aircraft. Here, four kills were classified as ASM, six as VNE/ASM and ten were confirmed.

At the end of the August, *Stab*/JG 300 (based at Deelen) could muster four Fw 190As, I./JG 300 (Bonn-Hangelar) 29 Bf 109G-6s, II./JG 300 (Rheine) four Fw 190A-5/6s of its own and III./JG 300 (Oldenburg) just a single Bf 109T. Losses for the month comprised nine pilots killed and 25 aircraft destroyed or damaged. Here, the figure was made up of eight Bf 109Gs and 17 Fw 190As, of which 16 were complete write-offs. Again, 13 of the aircraft came from JG 1, with a further five belonging to JG 11.

During September, JG 300 was operational on eight nights – 3–4 (raid on Berlin), 5–6 (Mannheim and Ludwigshafen), 6–7 (München), 22–23 (Hannover), 23–24 (Mannheim), 24–25 (a single aircraft *Moskito-Jagd* or 'Mosquito hunt'), 27–28 (Hannover) and 29–30 September (Bochum), and claimed the destruction of 64 RAF bombers. Here, 12 were recorded as ASM, 12 were confirmed, five were classified as VNE/ASM, two were rejected and three were credited to the *Flak* arm. As a measure of its ongoing performance, JG 300 claimed 15 of the 35 nightfighter victories logged on the night of 22–23 September, 14 of 38 the following night, 13 of 48 on 27–28 September and two of seven 48 hours later.

In terms of aircraft strength, month-end saw *Stab*/JG 300 (at Deelen) able to muster one Fw 190A-5 and four Fw 190A-6s, I./JG 300 (Bonn-Hangelar) 42 Bf 109G-6s, II./JG 300 (Rheine) five Fw 190A-5/6s and III./JG 300 (Oldenburg) one Bf 109G-6 and one Bf 109T. Losses for the month comprised 15 pilots killed and 40 aircraft destroyed or damaged. This latter figure was made up of 22 Bf 109Gs and 18 Fw 190As, of which 25 were complete write-offs. Again, 12 of the fighters came from JG 1, with a further 11 belonging to JG 11.

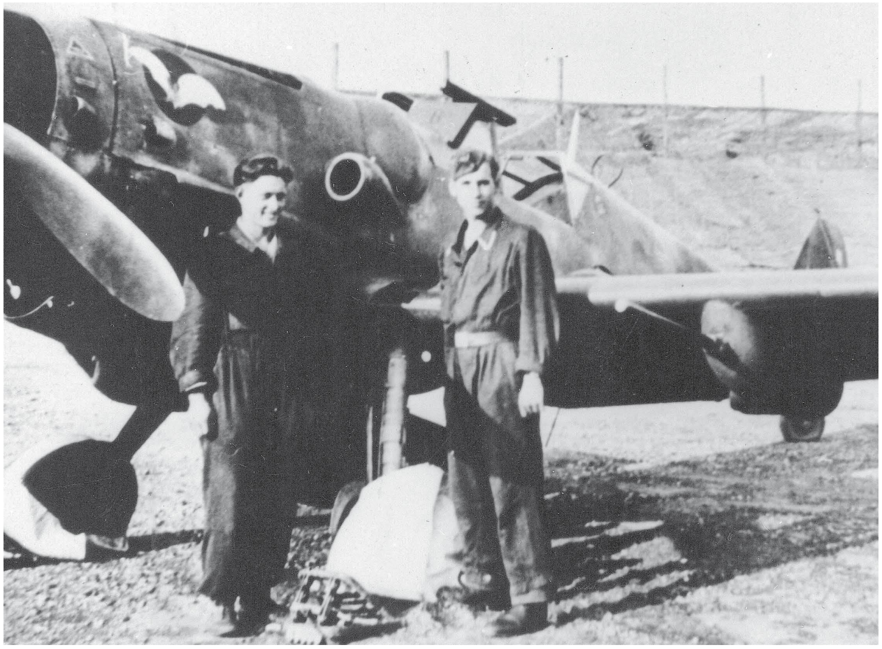
September 1943 was also significant, as on the 26th the Luftwaffe formed a new 30.*Jagddivision* to control its three *Wilde Sau Geschwader* (JGs 300, 301 and 302) and a *Beluchter* (illuminator) unit in the form of III./*Kampfgeschwader* (Bomber Wing, KG) 3. Recently promoted Oberst Herrmann was placed in command of the new organisation, which was completely separate from the conventional *Nachtjagdverband*.

According to Generalleutnant Joseph 'Beppo' Schmid (in his capacities as *Kommandierender General* (Commanding General) of the Luftwaffe's I.*Jagdkorps* and then *Oberbefehlshaber* (commander-in-chief) of the service's *Luftwaffenkommando West* (Luftwaffe Command West) during 1944–45), this 'otherness' resulted in 30.*Jagddivision* leading a 'life of its own apart from others to such a degree that the twin-engined [nightfighter] commands and, above all, the twin-engined units never knew when, where and how many single-engined nightfighters were being engaged'.

With regard to III./KG 3's activities, the *Wilde Sau* 'illuminators' were based at Münster-Handorf and utilised Ju 88A-4 bombers to drop parachute flares to (as their name suggests) illuminate bomber streams for the *Wilde Sau* pilots. Such aircraft are understood to have been unarmed, to have incurred 'serious losses' on 17 November 1943 (at which time, the *Gruppe* had between 25 and 40 Ju 88A-4s on strength), to have been re-designated I./KG 7 and then I./NJG 7 and to have been re-mustered as a conventional twin-engined nightfighter unit during February 1944.

Returning to JG 300, October 1943 saw the *Geschwader* operational on nine nights – on 2–3 (a raid on München), 3–4 (Kassel), 4–5 (Frankfurt), 7–8 (Stuttgart and Friedrichshafen), 8–9 (Hannover and Bremen), 18–19 (Hannover), 20–21 (Leipzig) and 22–23 October (Kassel), and 31 October–1 November (an RAF Mosquito raid on the Ruhr), resulting in claims for 23 enemy bombers destroyed. Of these, seven were confirmed, four were credited to the *Flak* arm, four were logged as ASM and four were classified as VNE/ASM. These victories represented two of eight nightfighter claims made on 2–3 October, four of 18 the following night, two of 12 on 4–5 October, five of 33 on the 8–9th, five of 20 on the 18–19th and just five of 56 on 22–23 October.

Clearly, the *Wilde Sau Geschwader*'s effectiveness was already on the wane (alongside a parallel increase in that of the conventional *Nachtjagdverband* as it continued to recover from the *Window* setback of the previous July) as the north European autumn/winter set in. This said, losses for the month (one pilot killed and 26 aircraft damaged or lost) remained consistent with (and, in some cases, less than) those of the preceding September. Of the aircraft lost or damaged, 17 were Bf 109G-6s and nine were Fw 190As, with 14 of this figure being complete write-offs. Again, three of the total were aircraft assigned to JG 1.



The workhorses of the *Wilde Sau Geschwader* were the Bf 109G and the Fw 190A. Shown here is Oberfeldwebel Arnold Döring's Bf 109G-6/R6 'Red 6' from 2./JG 300, with points to note being the aircraft's underwing 20 mm MG 151/20 cannon gondolas and the bat insignia painted on its nose. The *Staffel* was based at Bonn-Hangelar when this photograph was taken in late 1943 (*Chris Goss Collection*)

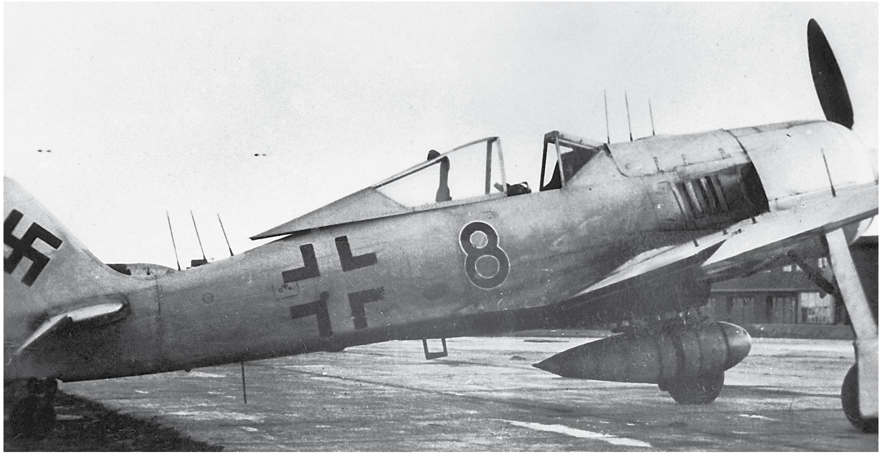
On 31 October, JG 300's inventory stood at five Fw 190A-6s with the *Geschwaderstab* based at Deelen, 40 Bf 109G-6s with I./JG 300 at Bonn-Hangelar, a cadre of one Fw 190A-5 and one Fw 190A-6 with II./JG 300 at Rheine and a cadre of four Bf 109G-6s with III./JG 300 at Oldenburg.

October 1943 was also significant in that it saw JG 300's first use against the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) when it scrambled for the first time in daylight on the 10th. Equally noteworthy was the cost of continual bad weather combat flight that resulted in 'punishing' wear and tear on the fighters' airframes and engines. With continual day and night use, proper servicing was proving difficult, with the result that the number of available fighters was reduced. Equally, the 'host' *Geschwader* were not best pleased to see large numbers of their aircraft being lost, damaged and/or made unserviceable by the reckless ethos of Herrmann and his *Wilde Sau* pilots.

Operations continued during November 1943, with JG 300 scrambling on seven nights during the month to contest RAF raids on 3–4 (Düsseldorf), 17–18 (Ludwigshafen), 18–19, 22–23, 26–27 (all Berlin), 25–26 (Frankfurt), 26–27 (Stuttgart) and 29–30 November (Essen). Poor weather prevented the *Geschwader* from engaging enemy bombers during the Berlin raid on 22–23

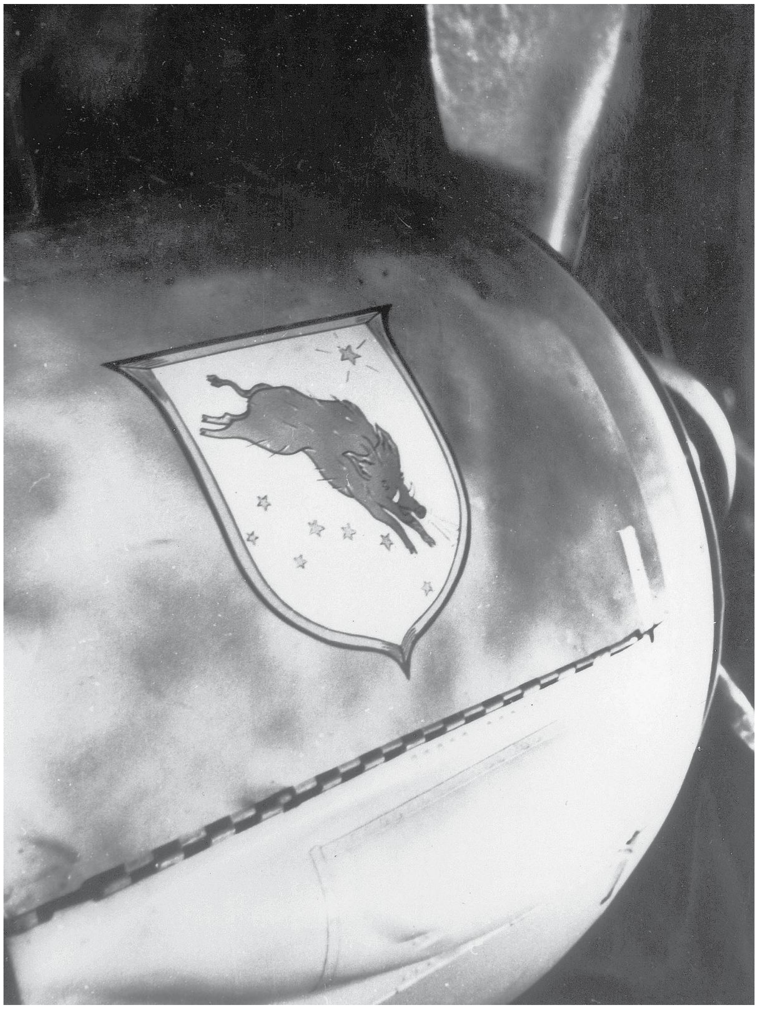
November, while the Essen raid on 29–30 November was carried out by RAF Mosquitos that could not be intercepted. Claims for the month amounted to 12 (one on 3–4, six on 18–19, two on 23–24 and three on 26–27 November) for the loss of six pilots killed and 20 aircraft destroyed or damaged. Here, ten of the 20 (comprising nine Bf 109Gs and 11 Fw 190As) were written off, with one of the Fw 190As belonging to II./JG 1.

For whatever reason, 26 November 1943 saw III./JG 300 being re-designated III./JG 302, while III./JG 301 became a new III./JG 300 that shared II./JG 27's Bf 109Gs. On the 30th, *Stab*/JG 300 (based at Deelen) was able to muster three Fw 190A-6s, I./JG 300 (Bonn-Hangelar) two Bf 109G-5s, 29 Bf 109G-6s and an Fw 190A-6, while II./JG 300 (Rheine) possessed four Fw 190A-6s. For its part, III./JG 300 (Oldenburg and then Wiesbaden-Erberheim) had no aircraft of its own.



JG 300 received its first *Neptun* AI radar-equipped Fw 190A during December 1943. Shown here is a 2./JG 300 Fw 190A-6 so equipped during late 1943/early 1944 (*EN Archive*)

December 1943 marked both the arrival of JG 300's first *Neptun* AI radar-equipped Fw 190 (see **Chapters One** and **Five**) and a significant turning point in its fortunes, as the unit was now tasked with both day and night operations. In the daylight context, I./JG 300 (the *Geschwader*'s only *Gruppe* to currently own its own aircraft) underwent daylight combat training at Bonn-Hangelar on 17, 23, 25, 26 and 27 November in preparation for upcoming operations against the USAAF.



A close-up of II./JG 300's insignia, which took the form of a charging boar set against a field of eight stars (*EN Archive*)

With its *Wilde Sau* hat on, operations against the RAF night bombers were flown on 2–3 (Berlin), 3–4 (Leipzig), 12–13 (*Moskito-Jagd*), 16–17 (Berlin), 20–21 (Frankfurt), 23–24 (Berlin) and 29–30 December (Berlin), with the seven missions resulting in claims for the destruction of 11 enemy aircraft. Of these, four were confirmed and two were classified as VNE/ASM. A total of three pilots were killed and 12 fighters (seven Bf 109Gs and five Fw 190As) lost or damaged. Of these, six were complete write-offs.

The *Geschwader*'s first daylight operation took place on 16 December, with a second following six days later. These two sorties resulted in the deaths of two pilots and the wounding of a third, the destruction of six of its own fighters and damage to a further four. Just one B-17 was claimed to have been destroyed in return.

From this point on, life for JG 300 was to become increasingly difficult as it tried to balance its new and old roles. On 31 December 1943, *Stab*/JG 300 (based at Deelen) is recorded as having three Fw 190A-6s, I./JG 300 (Bonn-Hangelar) four Bf 109G-5s, 18 Bf 109G-6s and an Fw 190A-6 and II. (Rheine) and III./JG 300 (Wiesbaden-Erbenheim) cadres of just four Fw 190A-6s and one Bf 109G-6, respectively.

The New Year brought little respite for JG 300, with the *Geschwader* contesting RAF night raids on 1–2 (Berlin), 2–3 (Berlin), 4–5 (a Mosquito raid on Berlin), 5–6 (Stettin), 13–14 (Essen), 14–15 (Braunschweig), 20–21 (Berlin), 21–22 (Magdeburg), 27–28 (Berlin), 28–29 (Berlin) and 30–31 January (Berlin). During these engagements, JG 300 claimed to have destroyed 32 enemy bombers (a number that included seven confirmed kills) at the cost of seven of its pilots killed and 28 of its fighters damaged or destroyed. This latter figure comprised 19 Bf 109Gs and nine Fw 190As, of which 17 were complete write-offs and four belonged to II./JG 27.

On the daylight front, JG 300 was scrambled to intercept USAAF raids on 5, 11 and 30 January – three missions that resulted in claims for two B-17s shot down for the loss of two pilots and four fighters, with a fifth fighter being damaged.

On a more positive note, January 1944 saw the new III./JG 300 being declared combat ready (on the 2nd) and receiving an influx of 20 new pilots between the 8th and 15th. As a result, the *Gruppe* now had a total of 38 pilots, and on the last day of the month, *Stab*/JG 300 (based at Deelen) could muster three Fw 190A-6s, I./JG 300 (Rheine) six Bf 109G-5s, ten Bf 109G-6s and an Fw 190A-6, while II. (Rheine) and III./JG 300 (Wiesbaden-Erbenheim) owned cadres of six Fw 190A-6/7s and a Bf 109G-6, respectively. Indeed, it was not until the end of May 1943 that III./JG 300 would be issued with a full complement of its own aircraft. In the interim, both II. and III./JG 300 continued to make use of 'buddy' units' fighters.

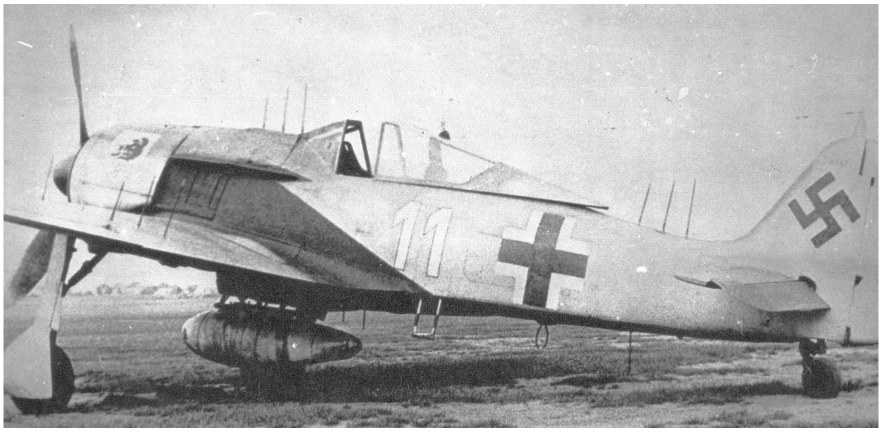
During February, JG 300 was operational on seven nights (raids on Berlin on the 1–2, 10–11 (a Mosquito raid) and 15–16 February, an attack on Leipzig on 19–20 February, a raid on Stuttgart on 20–21 February, an attack on Schweinfurt on 24–25 February and a raid on Augsburg on 25–26 February), during which it claimed to have shot down at least 11 bombers. Of these victories, one is known to have been confirmed, with a further two being classified as VNE/ASM. In return, the *Geschwader* had one pilot killed and 15 aircraft (nine Bf 109Gs and six Fw 190As) lost (six) or damaged.

Regarding daylight operations, JG 300 was airborne on the 20th, 21st, 22nd and the 24th of the month, claiming three B-24s destroyed for the loss of five pilots killed and three wounded. Thirteen fighters were destroyed and a further three damaged.

On 28 February, *Stab*/JG 300 was equipped with two Fw 190A-6s, I./JG 300 (based at Bonn-Hangelar) with 11 Bf 109G-5s and 12 Bf 109G-6s and II. (Rheine) and III./JG 300 (Wiesbaden-Erbenheim) could muster 12 Fw 190s and four Bf 109G-6s, respectively. Interestingly, one of II./JG 300's Fw 190s was a G-2 long-range fighter-bomber. It should also be noted that I./JG 300 maintained a detachment at Jüterbog between 18–21 February.

Elsewhere within JG 300's orbit, February 1944 saw the creation of 1. *Nachtjagdgruppe* (NJGr) 10 around a cadre of pilots from 1. and 2./JG 300. Intended to act as an operational evaluation *Gruppe*, NJGr 10 comprised three *Staffeln*, of which 1./NJGr 10 was equipped with *Wilde Sau* Bf 109 and Fw 190 fighters (the *Gruppe*'s other two *Staffeln* flew a mixture of 'conventional' twin-engined Bf 110G, Ju 88, He 219A and Ta 154 nightfighters).

With Hauptmann Friedrich-Karl Müller as its *Staffelkapitän*, 1./NJGr 10 appears to have been formed on 7 February at Bonn-Hangelar before moving to Werneuchen (where NJGr 10 is understood to have been commissioned on 1 January). As such, the *Staffel* used Bonn-Hangelar as a forward airfield, and on 28 August 1944 was split in two, with half becoming 2./NJG 11 (see **Chapter Four**). The remainder is quoted as now having been based at Bonn-Hangelar and Wiesbaden-Bilbis, and as having survived as 1./NJGr 10 until 27 October, when it was re-designated 3./NJG 11. A new 1./NJGr 10 was formed at Bonn-Hangelar which, in turn, was re-designated 7./NJG 11 during February 1945.



From July 1944, Oberleutnant Fritz E Krause was *Staffelkapitän* of 1./NJGr 10, prior to becoming the *Kommandeur* of III./NJG 11 in January 1945. Shown here is Krause's *Neptun*-equipped Fw 190A-6 'White 11' (Wk-Nr 550145) that he flew while serving with 1./NJGr 10. Of note are the *Neptun* radar's various rod antenna sub-arrays on the aircraft's nose, rear fuselage and upper wing surfaces (*Chris Goss Collection*)

It is perhaps worth noting that during August 1944, there is supposed to have been a second *Wilde Sau Staffel* within NJGr 10 (designated as 4./NJGr 10) that was equipped with seven Bf 109G-6s and Fw 190A-8s. At this remove, it has not proved possible to confirm the existence of this putative 4./NJGr 10.

During its existence, 1./NJGr 10 was equipped with a mixture of Bf 109F-2/G-5/G-6 and Fw 190 A-5/A-6/A-8 aircraft, with a number of the former being high-altitude, DB 605 AS-powered variants, while the latter included examples that were equipped with *Neptun* AI radar.

As befits an operational evaluation unit, 1./NJGr 10 saw combat by both day and night, with victories being claimed on eight nights between 19–20 February and 14–15 October 1944. Digging down, Hauptmann 'Nasen' Müller opened the *Staffel*'s score on 19–20 February when he claimed the destruction of a Lancaster. Three months later, on 22–23 May, Müller claimed another Lancaster and a '4-motor', while Oberleutnant Georg Seip bagged a Halifax. The next night, Müller claimed another '4-motor', with Oberleutnant Fritz E Krause accounting for No 692 Sqn Mosquito B IX MM147.

Moving forward, 23–24 August saw Müller inflict sufficient damage on a No 608 Sqn Mosquito B XX KB242 (this may have been Müller's only victory over a Mosquito) that was crash-landed upon returning to England, while Oberleutnant Krause claimed a Lancaster destroyed on 11–12 September. The next night, Oberfeldwebel Egbert Jaacks accounted for Mosquito B XVI MM126 of No 692 Sqn, with 5–6 October seeing an

Unteroffizier Günter (variously described as having been assigned to 2./*Ergänzungs-Nachtjagdgruppe* (Replacement Nightfighter *Gruppe*, Erg.NJGr – see **Chapter Four**) and/or NJGr 10) claim another Mosquito. The last identifiable 1./NJGr 10 victory took place on 14–15 October when Unteroffizier Hans Dürscheidt is logged as having destroyed Mosquito B XVI MM148 of No 692 Sqn.

The *Staffel*'s daylight sorties occurred on 11, 12 and 15 April 1944, with the sorties of the 11th (comprising seven Fw 190s) and 12th being airfield protection flights for Werneuchen. The sortie of the 15th involved five Fw 190s.

Returning to JG 300's activities, March 1944 saw the *Geschwader* fly against RAF night raids on 14–15 (a raid on Düsseldorf), 15–16 (Stuttgart), 18–19 (Frankfurt), 22–23 (Frankfurt), 24–25 (Berlin), 26–27 (Essen) and 30–31 March (Nürnberg). All told, 36 enemy bombers were claimed as having been destroyed, of which six are known to have been confirmed, three classed as ASM and two classified as VNE/ASM. These successes cost the unit two pilots killed and 16 fighters lost (11) or damaged. Here, the total was made up of 14 Bf 109s and two Fw 190s, with three aircraft belonging to II./JG 27.

During daylight hours, the *Geschwader* was operational on 4, 6, 8, 15, 18 and 23 March, during which it claimed 2.5 B-17s and two P-38s destroyed for the loss of six pilots killed, six wounded, 21 fighters destroyed and seven damaged.

At the end of March, JG 300's inventory stood at one Fw 190A-6 with its *Stab* at Deelen, one Bf 109G-3, seven Bf 109G-5s, 15 Bf 109G-6s and a Bf 109G-6/U4 with its first *Gruppe* at Bonn-Hangelar, one Fw 190A-5, one Fw 190A-5/U8, four Fw 190A-6s, 13 Fw 190A-7s, three Fw 190G-2s and five Fw 190G-3s with II./JG 300 at Rheine and seven Bf 109G-6s and a Bf 109G-6/U4 with its third *Gruppe* at Wiesbaden-Erbenheim.

March 1944 was also of some significance in that it was the first month that JG 300 flew near equal numbers of day and night missions. Furthermore, 30.*Jagddivision* was disbanded on the 16th of the month.

Again, March 1944 seems to have seen JG 300 making increased use of *Neptun* AI radar-equipped Fw 190As. On 22–23 March Leutnant Helmut Ortelbach of II./JG 300 utilised a radar-equipped Fw 190A-7 to complete a successful interception of a Lancaster, and two nights later, Leutnant Karl Shick of II./JG 300 tracked a number of targets on the radar installed in his Fw 190A-7, with one 'blip' being particularly clear. This turned out to be a bomber directly beneath him, and being too close to open fire on it, Shick decided to ram the aircraft, losing two-thirds of his starboard wing in the process. Luckily for Shick, he was able to bail out and survived the incident. Elsewhere, Leutnant Klaus Bretschneider of 6./JG 300 is also logged as having been flying a radar-equipped Fw 190 during this night action (24–25 March) over Berlin.

An atmospheric photograph showing 6./JG 300's Leutnant Klaus Bretschneider climbing out of the cockpit of his Fw 190A-6 nightfighter at the end of a combat sortie in March 1944. Of note is the small 'N' for *nacht,* denoting the aircraft's use as a nightfighter. Bretschneider enjoyed notable success as a *Wilde Sau* pilot, claiming 14 victories (11 of which were confirmed) (*EN Archive*)

Despite the disbandment of 30.*Jagddivision* meaning that the writing was on the wall for the original *Wilde Sau* concept/force capability, JG 300 continued to fly night missions throughout April 1944. Here, it was in action on the nights of 11–12 (raids on Aachen and Hannover), 20–21 (Köln), 22–23 (Düsseldorf and Braunschweig), 24–25 (Karlsruhe and München), 26–27 (Schweinfurt and Essen) and 27–28 (Friedrichshafen) April. During these missions, the *Geschwader* claimed 12 victories (one is known to have been confirmed, six were registered as ASM, one classified as VNE/ASM and one was credited to *Flak* gunners) for the loss of two pilots killed and 12 fighters destroyed. In all, 19 JG 300 aircraft were lost or damaged during night operations in April 1944, with the total comprising 15 Bf 109s and four Fw 190s.

April’s daylight operations were surprisingly limited, with JG 300 only participating in actions against the USAAF on the 8th and the 11th. No claims were made and only one fighter was lost during both operations.

At the end of the month, the *Geschwader* could muster 57 fighters, with the *Geschwaderstab* having one Fw 190A-6 and one Bf 109G-6 at Deelen, I./JG 300 11 Bf 109G-6s at Bonn-Hangelar, II./JG 300 three Fw 190A-5s, three Fw 190A-6s, seven Fw 190A-7s, four Fw 190A-8s, one Fw 190G-2 and ten Fw 190G-3s at Rhein until the 20th, and III./JG 300 16 Bf 109G-6s at Wiesbaden-Erbenheim. April also saw I./JG 300 maintaining a detachment at Rheine between the 13th and the 25th.

In what proved to be JG 300’s swansong as a pure *Wilde Sau* unit, May 1944 saw the *Geschwader* operational on the nights of 1–2 (a Mosquito raid on Aachen), 11–12 (targets in France and Belgium), 12–13 (Leuven (Louvain) and Hasselt), 22–23 (Dortmund and Braunschwieg), 24–25 (Aachen) and 27–28 May (Aachen and Bourg-Léopold). Ten enemy bombers were claimed to have been destroyed (of which four were confirmed and one was classified as ASM) for the loss of four pilots killed and 17 aircraft destroyed (seven) or damaged. Here, the total comprised 12 Bf 109s and five Fw 190s.

Perhaps surprisingly in view of JG 300 having now been re-roled as a day fighter unit, the *Geschwader* appears not to have flown any daylight operations during May 1944.

In terms of inventory, the last day of that month saw *Stab*/JG 300 (based at Deelen until the 13th, and then Bonn-Hangelar) able to muster single examples of the Bf 109G-6 and the Fw 190A-6, I./JG 300 (Bonn-Hangelar) 11 Bf 109G-6s, II./JG 300 (Dortmund) three Fw 190A-5s, three Fw 190A-6s, seven Fw 190A-7s, four Fw 190A-8s, one Fw 190G-2 and ten Fw 190G-3s and III./JG 300 (Wiesbaden-Erbenheim) 27 Bf 109G-6s. Again, I./JG 300 is reported to have deployed a detachment to Seyring during the period 13 May to 10 June 1944.

Post-May 1944, JG 300 (bar 10./JG 300 – see **Chapter Four**) operated solely in daylight. Looking at the *Geschwader*’s various *Gruppen*, I./JG 300 moved to Merzhausen during the month and then (as a *Reichsverteidigung* (Defence of the *Reich*) unit) to Herzgenaurach and Bad Wörishofen in July. In August, I./JG 300 transferred to the Harz region of Germany and then to the Berlin area in November. The *Gruppe* remained in the Berlin area until it was disbanded on 19 March 1945. Despite this, elements of I./JG 300 appear to have survived, and they arrived at Holzkirchen in mid-April.

For its part, II./JG 300 gave up its sixth *Staffel* to NJG 11 (where it became 8./NJG 11 – see **Chapter Four**) during May 1944 and was transferred from Dortmund to Frankfurt/Rhein-Main. By July, the *Gruppe* was operating as a *Reichsverteidigung* unit, having been designated a dedicated 'bomber killing' *Gruppe* (as II.(*Sturm*)/JG 300) and increased in size to four *Staffeln*. It was variously employed in the defence of Berlin, Wien and Strasbourg. In September, II./JG 300 moved to Erfurt, then Fisterwalde and, in October, to Löbnitz. During January 1945, the *Gruppe* undertook ground attack sorties against the advancing Soviet Red Army, before moving to Holkirchen and then Ainring, where it was absorbed into a new *Jagdgruppe* 300 just prior to the war in Europe ending on 7 May.

As a *Reichsverteidigung* unit, the *Geschwader*'s remaining *Gruppe* (III./JG 300) hosted the 'semi-detached' *Moskito-Jagd* 10./JG 300 (see **Chapter Four**). Like II.(*Sturm*)/JG 300, the unit was increased in size to four *Staffeln*. In June 1944, the *Gruppe* moved from Wiesbaden-Erbenheim to Jüterbog, where it stayed until the beginning of April 1945. Now stationed at Ainring, III./JG 300, like II.(*Sturm*)/JG 300, was in the process of being absorbed by *Jagdgruppe* 300 when Germany surrendered.

All told, JG 300 had served as a *Wilde Sau* nightfighter unit for ten months since the re-naming of JG *Herrmann* on 20 August 1943. From this date forward until its final night sorties in May 1944, the *Geschwader* claimed to have destroyed 241 RAF bombers, of which 52 are reported to have been confirmed by the Luftwaffe's claims verification department. Against this, JG 300's night war on the 'terror' bombers is estimated as having cost it 50 pilots killed and no fewer than 132 Bf 109Gs and 86 Fw 190As lost or damaged.

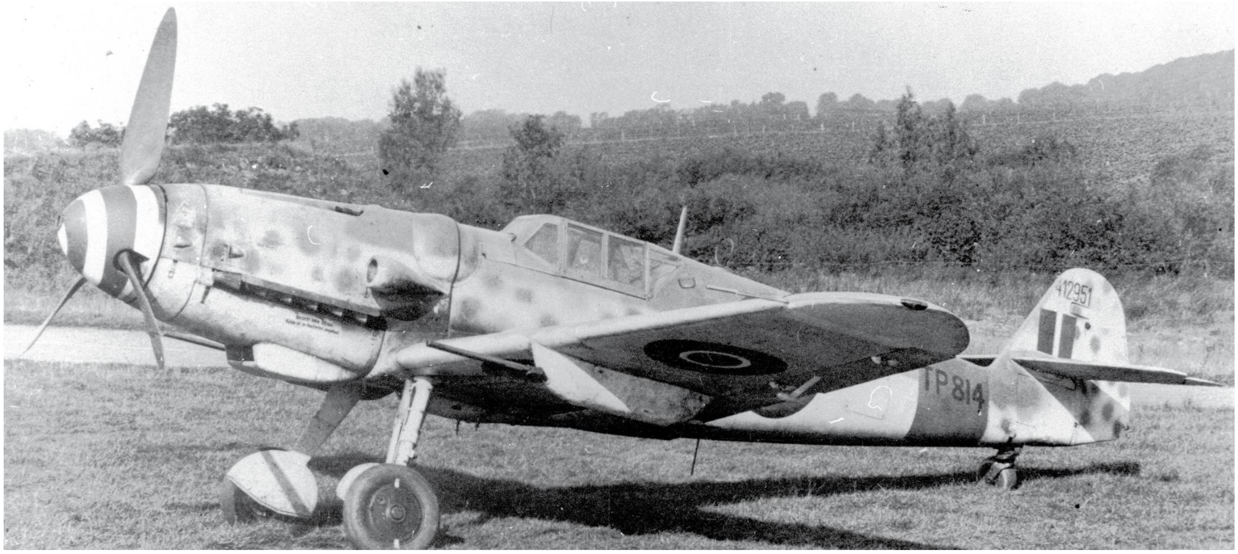
As if this was not bad enough, once daylight missions against the USAAF became a regular feature (from December 1943 onwards), the casualties in men and machines climbed even higher. Here (and during the period December 1943 to May 1944, while it was still operating in the nightfighter role), JG 300 claimed to have destroyed 4.5 B-17s, three B-24s and two P-38s for the loss of 15 pilots killed and ten wounded, 45 fighters destroyed and a further 15 damaged.

While the 'devil may care' attitude of the *Wilde Sau* ethos made excellent propaganda material with which to cheer a hard-pressed German population, JG 300 and its two sister *Geschwader* (see **Chapter Three**) paid an extremely heavy price in men and machines while undertaking their unique role as both dedicated day and nightfighter units.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPANSION

The apparent success of JG 300, personal support from Reichsmarschall Göring and the incomplete and ongoing recovery of the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighter arm from the effects of *Window* all but guaranteed the expansion of the *Wilde Sau* capability during the autumn of 1943. Accordingly, September–November of that year saw the creation of two new *Wilde Sau Geschwader*, designated as JGs 301 and 302.



On 21 July 1944, 1./JG 301's *Staffelführer*, Leutnant Horst Prenzel, landed by mistake at RAF Manston, in Kent, after a *Wilde Sau* mission over northern France. Prenzel's 'tall-tailed' Bf 109G-6/R6 Wk-Nr 412951 'White 16' was subsequently flight-tested in British colours, as shown here (*Chris Goss Collection*)

As of 26 September, the intention was for each of the now three *Wilde Sau Geschwader* to have one equipped and two *Aufsitzergruppen* (literally 'rider' *Gruppe*, but probably better translated as 'piggy-back' *Gruppe*) *Gruppen*. In terms of geographical spread, one *Geschwader*'s equipped *Gruppe* was to cover the Berlin–Leipzig–Magdeburg area, with its remaining two *Gruppen* operating in the north and northwest of this region. The equipped *Gruppe* of a second *Geschwader* (presumed to be JG 300) was to be based at Bonn-Hangelar, with its *Aufsitzergruppen* to the north and south of this airfield. The third *Geschwader*'s equipped *Gruppe* was to operate in the München–Augsburg–Nürnberg region, with one of its *Aufsitzergruppen* based in the same area, while the other protected Wien. Again, all three *Geschwader* were to be supported by the flying school at Altenburg, which was to provide replacement crews for the ‘target defence nightfighters’.

In numerical order, JG 301’s *Stab* was formed at Neubiberg on 1 October 1943 with Oberstleutnant Helmut Weinreich as *Kommodore*. The unit’s first *Gruppe* came into being at Neubiberg/Donau on the same day, and it was initially under the command of Hauptmann Richard Kamp. By the end of the month, I./JG 301 could muster 40 Bf 109G-6s (including, it is assumed, the six Bf 109G-5s and 19 Bf 109G-6s that it inherited from JG 50, who it had absorbed).

For its part, II./JG 301 (again, formed on 1 October 1943, and under the command of Hauptmann Graf Resugier) was stationed at Altenburg and was an *Aufsitzergruppe* that shared aircraft with I./JG 11.

JG 301’s remaining *Gruppe* (III./JG 301) was also established on 1 October 1943 and was stationed at Zerbst under Hauptmann Manfred Mössinger. On the last day of the month, this *Gruppe* was equipped with one Bf 109G-5 and 17 Bf 109G-6 interceptors. Again, the *Geschwader*’s *Stab* (based at Neubiberg) was equipped with three Bf 109G-6s and an Fw 190A-5 at this time.

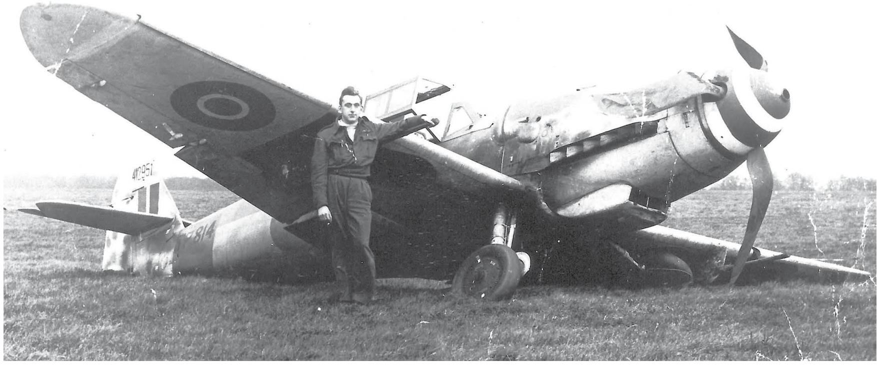
Almost immediately after their formation, JG 301’s three *Gruppen* began a merry-go-round of re-designations which saw I. and II./JG 301 becoming I. and II./JG 302 during November 1943. New first and second *Gruppen* were then established at Gardelegen and Wien-Seyring, respectively. For its part, III./JG 301 became III./JG 300 during October 1943, with a new third *Gruppe* being established at Zerbst during the same month.

While JG 301 and its three *Gruppen* were officially formed during October 1943, elements of the *Geschwader* appear to have entered combat during the preceding September. The first recorded mission took place on 3–4 September, and it was followed by five more operations on the nights of 5–6, 20–21, 22–23, 24–25 and 27–28 September. Total claims for the month amounted to 15, 11 of which occurred during the RAF’s raid on Hannover on 22–23 September. The night of 23–24 September saw Leutnant Gerd Bernhard of I./JG 301 ram a Lancaster, while Unteroffizier Andreas Hartl of 6./JG 301 claimed two ‘B-24s’ on 27–28 September. Conversely, seven of the *Geschwader*’s pilots were either killed (four) or injured.

The following month, JG 301 was in action on five occasions (the nights of 3–4, 4–5, 8–9, 18–19 and 22–23 October), during which 13 enemy aircraft were claimed as having been destroyed. In November, JG 301 appears to have only entered combat on the 18th–19th, when the RAF targeted Berlin and Mannheim. On this occasion, Oberleutnant Siegfried Wegner of 7./JG 301 claimed a ‘B-17’, while Major Helmut Weinrich of the *Geschwaderstab* claimed a ‘4-motor’.

The year ended with two more pilots being killed during December. The *Geschwader*’s inventory of aircraft on 31 December stood at one Bf 109G-6 with *Stab*/JG 301, three Bf 109G-6s with II./JG 301 and 22 such aircraft with III./JG 301. The figures for I./JG 301 are uncertain, with one source stating that the *Gruppe* had no aircraft of its own at this time, while a second gives a figure of four Bf 109G-5s, 18 Bf 109G-6s and an Fw 190A-6. What is known is that Unteroffizier Gerhard Koch of 3./JG 301 was killed on 4 January 1944 while flying a III./JG 3 aircraft. Other losses for December included two pilots killed and another injured.

During January 1944, *Stab* and I./JG 301 were based at Neubiberg to the south of München, II./JG 301 was at Seyring, south of Berlin, and III./JG 301 at Zebrst, southeast of Magdeburg. Night operations during January–February 1944 seem to have been limited to just three occasions (20–21 and 28–29 January and 19–20 February), with claims being made for the destruction of four enemy aircraft.



On 23 November 1944, Leutnant Horst Prenzel’s Bf 109G-6/R6 (now bearing the RAF serial number TP814) was written-off in a take-off accident at RAF Wittering, in what was then Huntingdonshire, where it was being prepared for trials against an RAF Tempest V fighter (*Chris Goss Collection*)

By the end of February, *Stab*/JG 301 was able to muster two Bf 109G-6s, I./JG 301 11 Bf 109G-5s and 12 Bf 109G-6s, II./JG 301 ten Bf 109G-6s and

III./JG 301 30 Bf 109G-6s.

JG 301 contested (amongst others) night raids on 15–16 (Stuttgart), 24–25 (Berlin) and 30–31 March (Nürnberg) and made claims for 11 RAF bombers destroyed for the loss or injury of five pilots. Even at this relatively early stage in its career, many of JG 301's night-time victories (as was the case with those of the other *Wilde Sau* units) were not being recognised by the Luftwaffe's claims verification organisation. By way of example, only six of the *Geschwader*'s January–March 1944 tally of 16 night bombers destroyed are understood to have been confirmed, with a similar number being discounted altogether.

Stepping back, January 1944 also saw both the establishment of 10./JG 301 and the *Geschwader* fly its first daylight mission against the USAAF. In the first instance, 10./JG 301 was to have been the precursor of a fourth *Gruppe*, the formation of which only took place at the beginning of 1945, by which time the *Geschwader* was a pure day fighter unit. The unit employed its Bf 109s in the defence of Romania's oil fields (from Targsorul-Nol and Otopeni) before being disbanded in July 1944.

Regarding daylight operations, JG 301's first such sortie took place on 5 January 1944, from which time forward combating the USAAF's daylight bombing of the *Reich* became an ever-increasing part of the *Geschwader*'s mission. Indeed, by the following March, JG 301 was flying more sorties against the USAAF than against RAF Bomber Command. By way of illustration, daylight missions over the period January–April 1944 comprised sorties despatched on 5, 7, 11, 29 and 30 January, 10, 20, 21, 22, 24 and 25 February, 4, 15, 18, 23 and 29 March and 2, 12, 13 and 24 April.

The burden imposed by having to fly both day and night missions was, as can be imagined, great, particularly as the *Geschwader*'s pilots had had no previous experience of day fighting. Some idea of the cost of such duality can be gained from the fact that between 7 January and 24 April 1944, JG 301 lost 72 fighters (with a further 11 being damaged) and 21 pilots killed (with a further 22 wounded and three missing) during daylight operations, and it was only able to claim 17 enemy aircraft (seven B-17s, seven B-24s, one P-38 and two P-51s) destroyed in return.

Under such circumstances, it was perhaps fortuitous that 25 February 1944 had seen the *Geschwader* finally receive a full complement of its own fighters. Here (and by the end of the following March), *Stab*/JG 301 was equipped with two Bf 109G-6s, I./JG 301 with one Bf 109G-3, seven Bf

109G-5s, 15 Bf 109G-6s and a single Bf 109G-6/U4, II./JG 301 with 20 Bf 109G-6s and III./JG 301 with 16 Bf 109G-6s.

Returning to the night war, JG 301 flew four missions against the RAF (resulting in two claims and the loss of three pilots) during April 1944.

The following month saw changes in the *Geschwader*'s fortunes, with May witnessing the disbandment of its *Geschwaderstab* and third *Gruppe*, leaving only I. and II./JG 301 operational. Ironically, I./JG 301's greatest success in the *Wilde Sau* role came at this low point in the *Geschwader*'s history when, on 5 June, it was transferred from Germany to France as part of the Luftwaffe's response to the expected Allied invasion of northern France. Here, its remit included the defence of the V1 missile-launching sites in the area from night air attacks.

By July, I./JG 301's Bf 109G-6s were based at Vitry-en-Artois (3./JG 301), Douai-Dechy (2./JG 301) and Cambrai-Epinoy (1./JG 301), with the *Gruppe Stab* operating from Saint-Dizier.

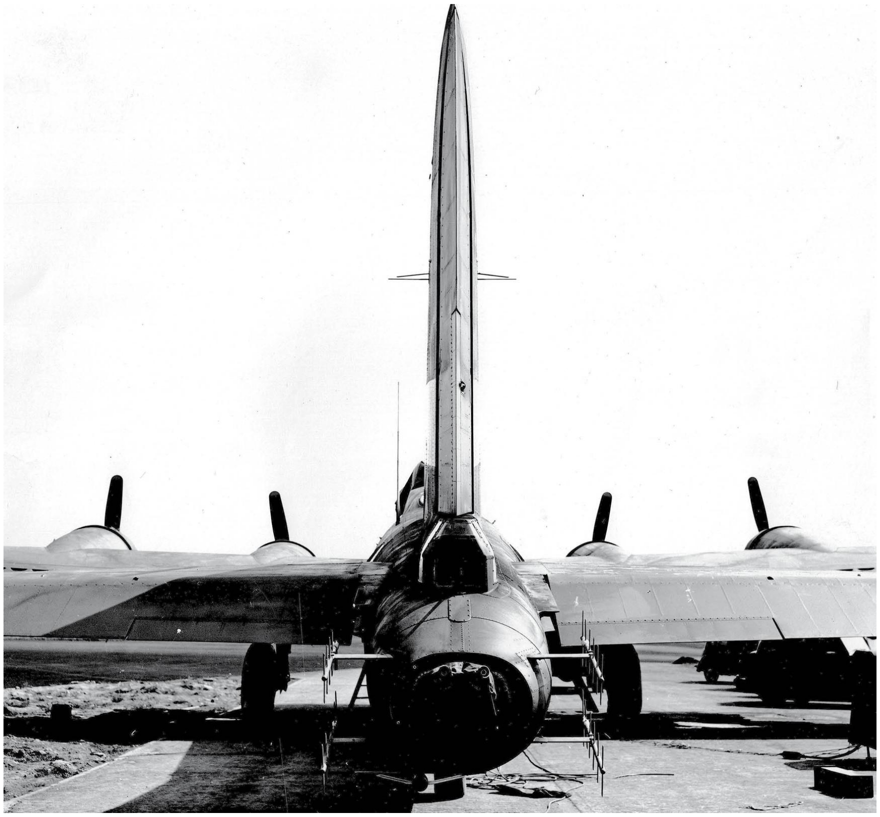
The V1 protection role that month resulted in claims for ten bombers (five Lancasters and five '4-motors') on 4–5 July, followed by another six (one Halifax, two Lancasters and three '4-motors') on 6–7 July. Good as these figures were, the *Gruppe*'s greatest success came on the night of 7–8 July when RAF Bomber Command carried out a raid on the V1 supply dump at Saint-Leu-d'Esserant. A combination of good weather conditions and 'perfect searchlight co-operation' allowed the *Gruppe* to claim the destruction of 25 bombers (with the total including ten Lancasters and seven '4-motors'). Starting at around 0015 hrs local time, the action centred on the area between Beauvais, Amiens and the Somme Estuary while the bombers were on their return flight to England.

Alongside these defensive operations, I./JG 301 also undertook escort duties for the *Mistel* (Mistletoe) combinations flown by KG 101. Here, the night of 24 June saw the *Gruppe* provide 20 Bf 109s in support of four *Mistel* aircraft during an attack on Allied shipping in the Baie de la Seine. For this raid, the targets were illuminated by flares dropped by Ju 88S pathfinders from I./KG 66. Post-mission, a smokescreen was reported and hits were claimed on four vessels. Mention of a smokescreen and four hits suggests that the foregoing may actually refer to an early July mission (which was also escorted by I./JG 301) during which a smokescreen was encountered and four targets were 'found'. The only confirmed Royal Navy *Mistel* casualty at this time was the frigate HMS *Nith*, which was heavily damaged.

I./JG 301’s nocturnal activities over France continued into August when, on the 8th–9th, 1./JG 301 clashed with RAF bombers resulting in the destruction of a Halifax. Sixteen days later, the *Gruppe* was withdrawn from France and transferred to Salzwebel for rest and refit.

While both successful and marking the end of JG 301’s association with night-time *Wilde Sau* operations, this French deployment resulted in heavy losses. When the *Gruppe* arrived in France, it had an establishment of 52 Bf 109s, three Ju 52/3m transports and 32 pilots. By 7 July, these numbers had been whittled down to 36 fighters and 27 pilots. 3./JG 301 had suffered the heaviest losses, with three of its original nine aircraft having been destroyed by the given date. Again (and as of 7 July), the *Gruppe* had received no replacement pilots or aircraft, with the former being due to the *Wilde Sau* training unit (JG 110) now concentrating on turning out day fighter pilots only and the latter resulting from the non-arrival of any of the ten replacement aircraft being held for it at the Ottingen depot. Subsequent to its return to Germany, I./JG 301 was almost wiped out as part of the daylight *Reichverteidigung* and went on to serve in the ground attack role in the Posen area in Poland during January 1945.

As a final point concerning JG 301’s *Wilde Sau* activities, it is interesting to note that its aircraft are reported to have used the beacon mode of their FuG 16 Z communications radios to home in on RAF jamming aircraft within the bomber streams over the *Reich*. While this technique is described as not having been able to establish the altitude at which the jammers were operating, it is said to have accounted for ‘several jamming aircraft over Germany’.



Wilde Sau unit JG 301 is reported to have used the beacon reception mode of the FuG 16 Z communications transceivers fitted to its aircraft to home in on Allied airborne jammers such as the *Airborne Cigar* (ABC) communications jamming B-17 shown here. ABC was targeted against the 'running commentary' that was so vital to the success of *Wilde Sau* operations (*Author's Collection*)

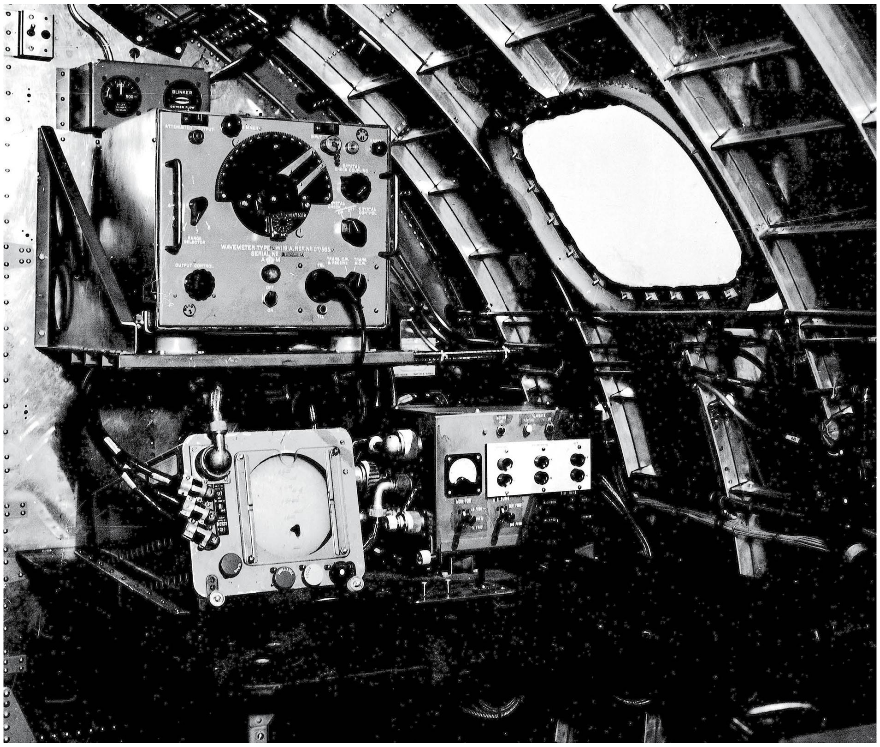
Planning for the establishment of a third and final *Wilde Sau Geschwader* (JG 302) commenced during late September 1943, with a *Geschwaderstab* subsequently being formed on 1 November. Initially under the command of Major Ewald Janssen, the new *Geschwader* comprised three *Gruppen*, the first of which (under Hauptmann Richard Lewens) was formed from I./JG 301 on 1 November 1943 at Jüterbog-Waldlager. On the same day, II./JG 302 (Major Treumund Engelhard) was established at Ludwigslust from II./JG 301, with III./JG 302 being created from III./JG 300 at Oldenburg.

Initially, both these latter *Gruppen* were *Aufsitzergruppen*, with II./JG 302 sharing aircraft with I./JG 11 and III./JG 54 and III./JG 302 flying fighters borrowed from III./JG 11. This state of affairs lasted into the New Year, with 31 January 1944 seeing *Stab*/JG 302 equipped with four Bf 109G-6s, I./JG 302 with one Bf 109G-5 and 13 Bf 109G-6s, II./JG 302 with 16 Bf 109G-6s and III./JG 302 with a single Fw 190A-6.

Like JG 301, elements of JG 302 appear to have gone into action before its formal activation, with the first recorded mission taking place on 27–28 September 1943. That night, three aircraft were claimed as destroyed for the loss of two pilots. A week later, I./JG 302 engaged an RAF raid on Kassel (a fight that resulted in a claim for the destruction of a Stirling bomber), while 22–23 October saw the unit in action against RAF raids on Kassel and Frankfurt – two Lancaster bombers were claimed as destroyed.

Following its official activation, JG 302 attempted to intercept raids on 22–23 (Berlin) and 26–27 November (Berlin and Stuttgart). These two actions resulted in claims for the destruction of six bombers (two Lancasters and four '4-motors', none of which were confirmed) for the loss of two more pilots.

The new month saw JG 302 being scrambled on 2–3 (a raid on Berlin), 16–17 (Berlin), 20–21 (Mannheim and Frankfurt), 23–24 (Berlin) and 29–30 (Berlin) December. These five operations resulted in claims for the destruction of 13 bombers (six Lancasters, one Halifax, two Stirlings and four '4-motors') for the loss of six pilots killed and one wounded. Only one of these victories was subsequently confirmed, and the high incidence of claims against '4-motors' is indicative of how difficult it was to positively identify target aircraft other than by the numbers of their engines. Indeed, the *Wilde Sau* pilots considered all four-engined aircraft to be hostile, irrespective of whether they were or not.



The ABC jammer was aimed at disrupting the Luftwaffe's very high frequency (VHF, 30 to 300 MHz band) voice communications channels. The equipment's operator (whose position in a B-17 is shown here) would listen out for appropriate transmissions, before tuning in one of up to three jammers to obliterate it (*Author's Collection*)

At the start of the new year, *Stab*/JG 302 was based at Döberitz, near Berlin, I./JG 302 at Jüterbog, south of Berlin, II./JG 302 at Ludwigslust, south of Schwerin, and III./JG 302 at Oldenburg. During January, III./JG 302 finally received its own aircraft, with the *Geschwader*'s establishment standing at 39 (a figure that was made up of one Bf 109G-5, 31 Bf 109G-6s, two Fw 190A-5s, one Fw 190A-5/U8 and four Fw 190A-6s) on the last day of the month.

Night operations that month saw sorties despatched on 1–2 (Berlin), 2–3 (Berlin), 5–6 (Berlin), 14–15 (Berlin), 20–21 (Berlin), 22–23 (Magdeburg) and 28–29 January (Berlin). Ten bombers (two Lancasters, three Halifaxes and five '4-motors') were claimed as destroyed, while III./JG 302 losses amounted to five pilots killed in action and one wounded.

January 1944 was also significant in that it saw JG 302 operating in daylight for the first time. From 5 January to 29 May (by which time II./JG 302 had ceased operations against RAF Bomber Command), JG 302 was airborne against the USAAF on 30 days (5 and 11 January, 10, 20, 22 and 24 February, 4, 6, 8, 18, 23 and 29 March, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 26 and 29

April and 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 19, 24, 28 and 29 May), during which actions the *Geschwader* lost 51 fighters (with a further 11 damaged), 23 pilots killed, two pilots missing and a further ten wounded. Against this, 37 enemy aircraft (18 B-17s, 15 B-24s and four P-51s) were claimed as destroyed.

Returning to JG 302's nocturnal activities, on 13 February the unit deployed *Einsatzkommando Helsinki* (Task Force Helsinki) to Helsinki-Malmi airport in Finland as a counter to Soviet *Aviatsiya dal'nego deystviya* (Long-Range Aviation) bombers that had begun making raids on the Finnish capital as part of an effort to force the Finns to the negotiating table. All told, *Einsatzkommando Helsinki* comprised three officers, 12 non-commissioned officers, 15 mechanics and seven armourers. Of this number, 11 were pilots (Oberfelwebel Fritz Dieckmann, Unteroffizier Werner Dienst, Hauptmann Karl-Heinz Dietsche, Oberfeldwebel Arther Gross, Oberfeldwebel Egbert Jaaks, Oberfeldwebel Hugebert Langelotz, Hauptmann Richard Lewens, Feldwebel Kurt Nachtigall, Oberfeldwebel Xaver Neumier, Hauptmann Rheindorf and Oberfeldwebel Dieter Rusche).

The detachment made its first kills on 16–17 February when two Soviet aircraft were claimed as destroyed. Ten days later, the *Kommando* is reported to have destroyed four Soviet aircraft (one Li-2, two TB-7s or Pe-8s and one DC-3). As a result of these claims, Hauptmann Lewens was awarded a Finnish Air Force pilot's badge on the 18th, with similar awards being made to Unteroffizier Dienst, Oberfeldwebel Jaaks, Oberfeldwebel Neumier and Oberfeldwebel Rusche on the 26th. Subsequently, Hauptmann Dietsche received his Finnish 'wings' on 12 December 1944.

Einsatzkommando Helsinki went on to make several daylight sorties in concert with the *Ilmavoimat* (Finnish Air Force) during March 1944, and it was also slated to train Finnish pilots in the art of *Wilde Sau* nightfighting. In the event, such training was not forthcoming as the Ar 96B trainers that were to have been used never arrived. Accordingly, the *Kommando* was disbanded in early May and had returned to Germany by the end of the month. As the requirement for a cadre of Finnish nightfighter pilots remained, the Finns sent a detachment to Germany for *Wilde Sau* training with JG 110 and 1./Erg.NJGr during July.

As planned, the *Ilmavoimat*'s nightfighting capability was to be vested in *Hävittäjälentolaivue* (Fighter Squadron, HLeLv) 30, which is reported at one time to have had an establishment of ten Bf 109G-6s (five delivered in March), three Bf 109G-6/Y nightfighters (received in May and assigned to

1./HLeLv 30) and a small number of Viima II training aircraft. It is suggested that two of the squadron's Bf 109G-6/Ys were stationed at Malmi as nightfighters during June, with the unit providing night cover for Helsinki, Kotka, Turku and Tampere from the following August. The pilots under training in Germany were assigned (without aircraft) to HLeLv 30 in September, and the squadron made its last war flight on 8 October. HLeLv 30 was disbanded on 27 November, with its pilots being re-assigned to HLeLv 31 and 33 during December.

Post-war, Finland retained a Bf 109G-based nightfighter capability within HLeLv 31 until the summer of 1948, and then in *Pommituslentolaivue* (Bomber Squadron) 41 until the summer of the following year. In this way, the ghost of the *Wilde Sau* force survived Germany's capitulation in May 1945.

Returning to JG 302's *Wilde Sau* operations over Germany, 2 March 1944 saw the *Geschwader*'s *Kommodore*, Major Ewald Janssen, transferred to *Schlachtgeschwader* (Ground Attack Wing, SG) 4 and replaced by Major Kurt Peters. Five days later, 3./JG 302's Unteroffizier Josef Feist failed to return from an intercept mission against 'nuisance raiders' (likely to have been RAF Mosquitos), while 14–15 March saw I./JG 302 claim the destruction of two Lancasters. This is unlikely, as the main thrust of RAF operations on that night was a raid on Düsseldorf by 30 Mosquitos. Two nights later, the *Geschwader* claimed another pair of Lancasters during an RAF raid on Frankfurt, while at the same time losing Feldwebel Lutz (4./JG 302), who failed to return from the mission.

Much greater success attended the *Geschwader*'s engagement with RAF bombers attacking Berlin on 24–25 March. Here, claims were made for the destruction of two Halifaxes, four Lancasters and three '4-motors'. Against this, three pilots were wounded. The month's activities concluded on the night of 30–31 March when one '4-motor' was claimed for the loss of two pilots. Of the described 14 claims, post-war research indicates only one as having been confirmed.

Nocturnal victories the following month were equally thin on the ground, with only two Lancasters and three '4-motors' being claimed in actions that occurred on the nights of 22–23 and 26–27 April. May 1944 saw the *Geschwader* caught up in the major restructuring of the *Wilde Sau* force alluded to earlier, with *Stab* and III./JG 302 being disbanded and II./JG 302 re-designated III./JG 300. This left I./JG 302 as the unit's lone operational element, with the only identified night claims for the month being a pair of confirmed '4-motors' that were brought down on 22–23 May (the date of II./JG 302's last sortie against the RAF).

Legion Condor veteran Major Ewald Janssen was the first *Kommodore* of JG 302, having previously served as the *Gruppenkommandeur* of I./JG 300. Awarded the Knight's Cross in October 1944, he had flown more than 400 operational sorties by war's end (*Tony Holmes Collection*)

Elsewhere, I./JG 302 was transferred to Götzendorf, near Wien, at the end of April 1944 and was strengthened by the addition of a fourth *Staffel*. Now effectively part of the daylight *Reichsverteidigung*, the *Gruppe* paid heavily for its switch from night to daylight operations, as is graphically illustrated by the seven daylight missions it flew between 9–30 June. Nineteen bombers (two B-17s and 17 B-24s) and four fighters (all P-38s) were claimed in exchange for the loss of 26 fighters (with three more damaged), 11 of its pilots killed and a further five wounded.

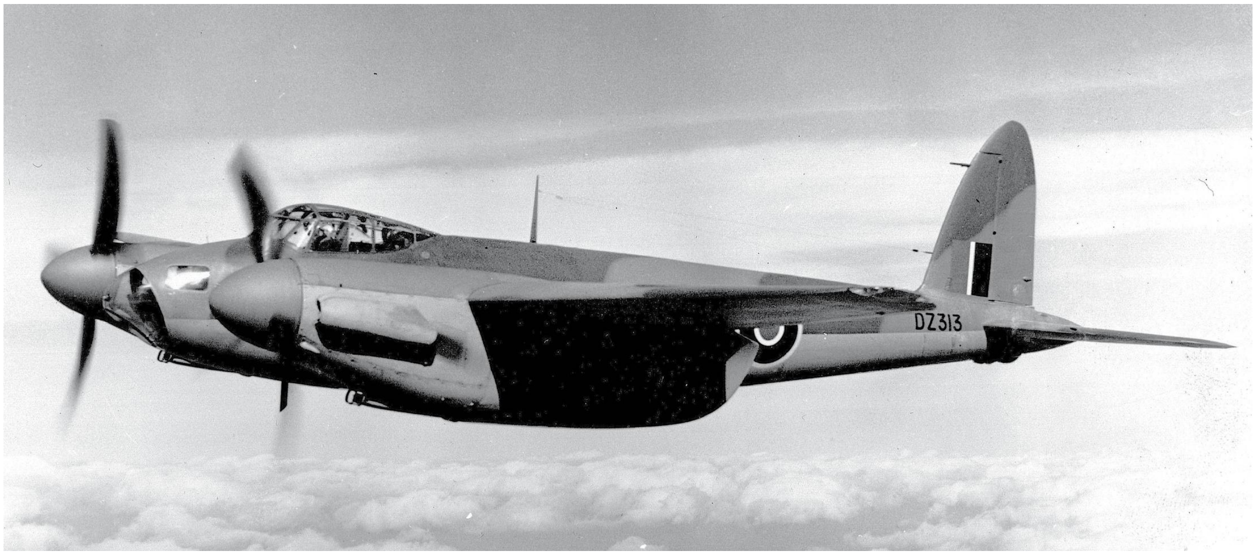
Subsequently, in July–August, the *Gruppe* operated over Hungary, where it was almost wiped out. The remains of I./JG 302 returned to *Reich* territory during September and were merged into a new III./JG 301 *Reichsverteidigung Gruppe* at Platzen, near Erfurt.

A review of the activities of these two *Geschwader* indicates that in the *Wilde Sau* role (and apart from the cited exceptions) neither were particularly successful. Both emerged at a time when the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighters had begun to introduce new techniques of nightfighting operations (including *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd*) by twin-engined interceptors in response to RAF Bomber Command's tactical and electronic countermeasures, and at a time of year (autumn–winter 1943–44) when weather conditions over Germany were such as to make successful 'cat's eyes' interceptions more difficult. From this point on, *Wilde Sau*-type nightfighters would be targeted almost solely against the RAF's Mosquito bomber and reconnaissance aircraft that relied on their speed to protect them against attack from conventional nightfighters.

CHAPTER FOUR

POSTSCRIPT

The disbandment of 30.*Jagddivision* and the conversion of JGs 300, 301 and 302 to daylight interception duties during the spring–summer of 1944 did not mean the end of *Wilde Sau* nightfighting. Indeed, *Objektnachtjagd* (the term now used to describe *Wilde Sau* operations) had become an embedded tactical option throughout the *Nachtjagdverband*, and would remain so until the end of the war, while high-performance single-seat nightfighters were seen as a solution to the problem posed by Allied Mosquito bombers and reconnaissance aircraft that were flying too high and fast for the Luftwaffe's twin-engined nightfighters to successfully intercept them. This latter strand resulted in the creation of the *Moskito-Jagd* 10./JG 300 and NJG 11 units supported by a training capability that was variously known as the *Ergänzungs-Nachtjagdstaffel*, the *Ergänzungs-Nachtjagdgruppe (einmot)* and then *Ergänzungs-Jagdgeschwader* 2.



Throughout World War 2, the Mosquito's altitude and speed performance proved to be a thorn in the side of the Luftwaffe's day and night interceptors. So great was its impact that it was the subject of extensive *Moskito-Jagd* operations by both day and night. Shown here is bomber-optimised Mosquito B IV DZ313, with other versions of the design acting as fighter, fighter-bomber and reconnaissance platforms. This aircraft, assigned to No 105 Sqn, was lost on a day attack on Hannover on 20 October 1942 (*Author's Collection*)

Looking at 10./JG 300 first, the *Staffel* is understood to have been created from a cadre of I./JG 53 pilots (including Leutnant Egon Ohletz, who was killed in action on 7 July while acting as 10./JG 300's *Staffelführer*) on 1 June. By way of background, III./JG 300 (to which 10./JG 300 nominally belonged) had flown at least 36 anti-Mosquito operations between June and 13–14 August that had resulted in four combats and one Mosquito claimed as having been damaged. This less than successful performance led the OKL to mandate 10./JG 300 as a dedicated *Moskito-Jagd* unit specialising in 'day and night anti-Mosquito fighting'. Such an objective required the recruitment of pilots who were trained in single-engined all-weather blind flying, and the 'new' 10./JG 300 appears to have been equipped with the fastest high-altitude versions of the Bf 109 that were then available.

When operating at night, 10./JG 300 launched its aircraft into 'waiting' areas that served the Ruhr (four zones), the Netherlands and north Germany (three), Berlin (two), Leipzig (one) and München (two), with each zone being marked by converging searchlights that met at an altitude of 7000 m. Again, each 'waiting' area was located at an altitude in excess of 8000 m so that it was above the 2000–8000 m window in which the relevant *Flakdivision* could fire at will. Anti-Mosquito sorties were only launched on clear nights (when cloud cover did not exceed three- to four-tenths) and searchlight batteries were able to illuminate aircraft at high altitudes.

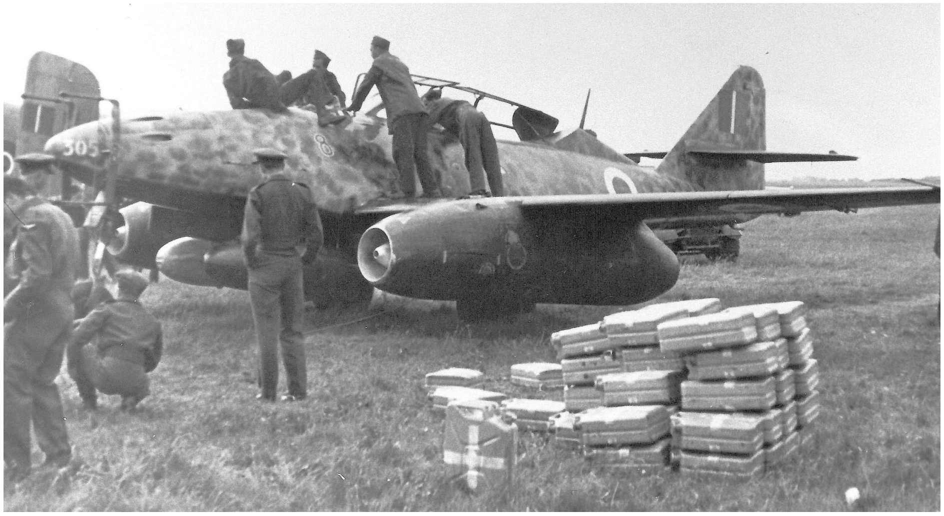
Each evening, 10./JG 300 communicated with its controlling *Jagddivision* to establish whether or not the night's operating conditions were favourable. Once committed, the *Staffel*'s fighters climbed to their assigned 'waiting room' (reaching a height of 9000 m within 20 minutes) and jettisoned their drop tanks after 30 minutes in the air. Pilots were advised not to drop below 8500 m in order to prevent damage from 'friendly' *Flak* fire, and the time available for combat was in the order of 35 minutes, within an estimated radius of action of 350 km. Again, 20 minutes of flying time had to be factored in to cover a return to and a landing at base.

As of early September, 10./JG 300 was under the command of Oberleutnant Herbert Böttcher, and it was always 'semi-detached' from the parent *Geschwader*. The *Staffel* retained its JG 300 designation until 30 November, when it was re-designated II./NJG 11 at Jüterbog-Wadlager.

Oberleutnant Kurt Welter is perhaps the most controversial *Wilde Sau* pilot of them all, being viewed as either a high-scoring ace (63 victories, including 25 while flying the Me 262 with 10./NJG 11) or a heavy drinking, womanising charlatan who inflated his victories by perhaps as much as a factor of four. At this remove, the actual number of Welter's aerial 'kills' will probably never be known for certain (*EN Archive*)

As a semi-independent *Staffel*, 10./JG 300's first confirmed victory occurred on 21 August when Oberfeldwebel Müller destroyed No 540 Sqn Mosquito B IX MM360 during daylight. Eight days later, Leutnant Kurt Welter claimed the destruction of two Lancasters on the night of 29–30 August, with both victories being confirmed. Welter (properly Kurt Johan Franz Ludwig Welter) was without doubt the most divisive character of the *Wilde Sau* community, being viewed as either the top-scoring *Wilde Sau* pilot who achieved 63 victories (including 25 while flying the Me 262A jet fighter) in 93 combat sorties or a heavy drinking, womanising charlatan who inflated his victories by perhaps as much as a factor of four.

Biographically, Welter, who was born on 25 February 1916, was an ex-policeman and NSDAP member who reportedly achieved his first victory while assigned to 5./JG 301 on 22–23 September 1943. After stints with JGs 300, 301 and 302, he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 10./JG 300 on 1 September 1944. Welter maintained this position until 2 November 1944 when he transferred to II./NJG 11. As a Leutnant, he took over command of *Nachtjagderprobungskommando Me 262* (Me 262 Night-Fighter Test Flight) from Major Gerhard Stamp, who had set it up at Rechlin during late 1944. In January 1945, this *Kommando* was re-designated 10./NJG 11, with Welter as *Staffelkapitän*. Made a prisoner of war (PoW) in May 1945, Welter was released from captivity in July 1947, only to be killed two years later in a motoring accident in Schleswig-Holstein on 17 March 1949.



At the end of the conflict in Europe, 10./NJG 11 was equipped with a mixture of single-seat Me 262A-1a and two-seat Me 262B-1a/U1 nightfighters. Shown here is the unit's Me 262B-1a/U1 Wk-Nr 110305 'Red 8' which was captured by the British in May 1945 and subsequently shipped to South Africa for display. It has been an exhibit in the South African National Museum of Military History in Johannesburg for many years (*Chris Goss Collection*)

At this remove, it is unlikely that Welter's true score will ever be known, with (at the time of writing) the latest research suggesting that 12 of his night claims and four of his daylight claims can be confirmed as real.

Looking at the *Nachtjagderprobungskommando Me 262* in more detail, this 'experimental unit for Mosquito hunting' appears to have had an initial strength of three Bf 109G/AS fighters and four pilots (including Leutnant Georg Czypionka, Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach and Oberfeldwebel Walter Baltruschal). The Bf 109G/AS were to be replaced by five Me 262s, which were to be based at Wunstorf, with Faßberg as an operating location in May 1945. Again, the *Kommando* was further notified that it was to receive five two-seat Me 262B-1a/U1 nightfighters equipped with FuG 218 AI radar. Once in post, Welter began to train the *Kommando*'s pilots in the art of flying the jet-propelled Me 262 – a process that benefitted from the availability of a two-seat Me 262B-1a coded 'E3+04'.

Known operations began on 13–14 January 1945 when Welter claimed to have used an Me 262A-1a to destroy a pair of enemy bombers in the Stettin area. On the following night, he claimed two more jet kills (two Mosquitos), with the after-action report suggesting that attacks 'on four-engined bombers with an 8-262 [the official nomenclature for the Me 262] [were] difficult due to the excess of speed'. Again, [preserving fuel by flying at low speeds of around 350 km/h] was deemed [possible], and the use of 'Y-' and 'Egon guidance' was 'flawless'. In this context, the 'Y-' and 'Egon' systems were radio/radar ground-controlled intercept (GCI) applications.

In terms of aircraft, *Kommando Welter* received its first pair of Me 262A-1as on 30 December, with two more arriving the day after. A fifth example was delivered on 5 January. The unit received its first Me 262B-1a/U1 during March, with modern research suggesting that during its lifetime (both as *Kommando Welter* and as 10./NJG 11), the unit was associated with eight Me 262A-1as (including Wk-Nr 110600, 110603, 110610, 110652, 110932, 111916 and 500075) and eight Me 262B-1a/U1s (Wk-Nr 110305, 110306, 110307, 110378, 110635, 110636, 110979 and 111980).

Of the single-seaters, 110600 was 70 per cent damaged in a strafing attack on 21 February, 110603 was 90 per cent damaged on the night of 17–18 February, 110610 was destroyed in a crash on 21 January, 110652 crashed on 3 March, 110932 crashed on either 4 February or 4 March, 111916 was 30 per cent damaged in a landing accident on 12 March and 500075 was 20 per cent damaged in a crash landing on 15 February.

Of the two-seaters, 110305, 110306, 110635 and 111980 were all captured by the Allies at the end of the war, while 110636 was lost in combat during March. 110378 was destroyed on the ground on 13 April and 110307 (which may have been fitted with a twin MG 151/20 *schräge musik* – usually translated as jazz music – upward-firing cannon installation) crashed during March 1945. In this latter context, it is perhaps worth noting that in German, *schräge* also means oblique and/or slanting, making the term *schräge musik* a clever play on words when referring to upward-firing weapon fits that were installed at an oblique angle.

Returning to 10./JG 300, its ongoing ‘score sheet’ saw 6–7 September 1944 as the date when Welter claimed the destruction of a Mosquito (possibly No 169 Sqn’s FB VI PZ230) that was subsequently jointly credited to both him and the *Flak* arm. On 12–13 September both Welter and 10./JG 300’s Oberfeldwebel Walter Baltruschat claimed double Mosquito victories. During daylight hours on the 13th, Welter claimed yet another Mosquito, which was later classified as VNE/ASM. The night of 13–14 September saw 10./JG 300’s Leutnant Karl Mitterdorf claim a Mosquito over Berlin. Here, the RAF lost both No 608 Sqn Mosquito B XX KB359 and No 692 Sqn Mosquito B XVI MM126 from a force that attacked the German capital.

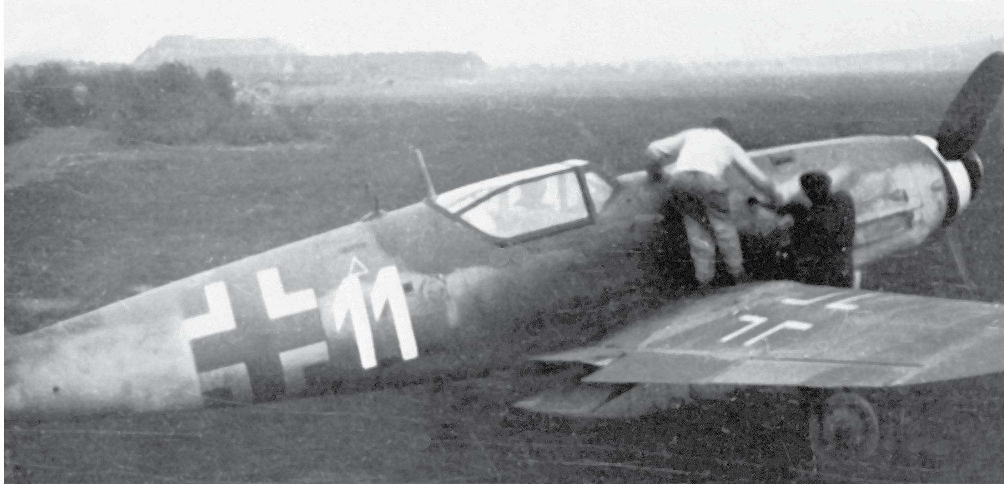
Moving forward, on 14 September the *Staffel*’s Unteroffizier Friedrich Neppach claimed a Mosquito ten minutes before midnight. On 15–16 September 10./JG 300’s Feldwebel Klaus Reichenbach claimed a Mosquito destroyed south of Berlin and Leutnant Welter claimed another brace of Mosquitos in the Berlin-Magdeburg area. Reichenbach’s and one of Welter’s claims were classified as VNE/ASM. On this night, the RAF lost No 608 Sqn Mosquito B XX KB239, No 157 Sqn Mosquito NF XIX TA396 and Mosquito FB VIs PZ184 and PZ226 from Nos 515 and 239 Sqns, respectively.

Two nights later (18–19 September), Welter claimed another Mosquito (the RAF lost No 627 Sqn Mosquito B IV DZ635 and Mosquito FB VIs PZ177 and NS962 of Nos 23 and 515 Sqns, respectively, that night), followed by Leutnant Karl Mitterdorfer claiming another Mosquito ‘kill’ on 5–6 October. No such aircraft was lost by the RAF on this date, however. On the following night, 10./JG 300’s Leutnant Welter, Unteroffizier Anton Schmid and Leutnant Georg Czypionka all claimed to have shot down Mosquitos, with RAF records indicating the loss of No 571 Sqn Mosquito B XVI MM113 and No 627 Sqn Mosquito B XX KB195. The night of 27–28 October appears to have seen 10./JG 300’s last Mosquito ‘success’ before it became part of NJG 11. Welter claimed yet another ‘kill’ that is not backed up by German or British records.

As was the case with all other *Wilde Sau* units, 10./JG 300’s victories came at a heavy cost, with ten pilots being killed between 20 June and 25 August 1944. The first loss came when Unteroffizier Heinz Stegmeyer was shot down and killed by a USAAF P-51. On 7 July Leutnant Egon Ohletz perished after bailing out of his Bf 109G-6 during a daylight sortie, and 11 days later both Unteroffizier Rüdolf Müller and Unteroffizier Berthold Hilgendorf were killed. The month ended badly for 10./JG 300, for on 29 July Fähnrich Peter Gremer, Unteroffizier Max Schmidt and Unteroffizier Gerhard Schiemann were all killed.

Moving into August, Leutnant Alfred Knörle died in a daylight mid-air collision on the 15th, and Oberfeldwebel Günther Sterz was declared missing in action on the night of the 18th–19th. Finally, 25 August saw the last loss of this period of operations when Leutnant Rudolf Winter was killed during a daylight sortie.

As noted earlier, 10./JG 300 eventually formed the basis of II./NJG 11 in November 1944. Designed from the outset for *Objektnachtjagd* and *Moskito-Jagd,* NJG 11 eventually reached a strength of three *Gruppen*, the first of which was formed between 28 August and 27 October. Under the command of Major Friedrich-Karl Müller, I./NJG 11 comprised three *Staffeln* which were created on 28 August (1. and 2./NJG 11) and 27 October (3./NJG 11). Again, 1./NJG 11 was initially based at Lippstadt and Köthen, having been formed in part from 6./JG 300's *Nachtjagdkommando Ploener*, while 2. and 3./NJG 11 were created from 1./NJGr 10 at Bonn-Hangelar. Subsequent to its formation, 1./NJG 11 moved to Faßberg during November and then to Echterdingen in January. Again, the original 1./NJG 11 was re-designated 8./NJG 11 on 4 January, with a new 1./NJG 11 being created from 2./NJG 11 at Echterdingen.



By 1945, NJG 11 was equipped with a variety of late-model Bf 109 fighters that included examples of the G-10, G-14 and K-4 variants. Shown here is a Bf 109G-14 of I./NJG 11, which was photographed at Bonn-Hangelar during late 1944/early 1945. While not confirmed, it is possible that this aircraft is a Bf 109G-14/AS model that was powered by a DB 605 AS engine (*EN Archive*)

Stepping back, 2./NJG 11 moved from Bonn-Hangelar to Darmstadt-Griesheim in September 1944 and then to Echterdingen in March 1945. Again like 1./NJG 11 (and as already noted), 2./NJG 11 was re-designated (becoming 1./NJG 11) during January 1945 and was reformed at Echterdingen from assets drawn from both I. and III./NJG 11. Here, the 'new' 2./NJG 11 is thought to have been subordinate to NJG 6 at some time in its career. 3./NJG 11 operated from Bonn-Hangelar (with a detachment at Twente, in the Netherlands) and on 4 January 1945 provided the cadre to form 7./NJG 11.

In terms of inventory, I./NJG 11 was equipped with 18 Bf 109G-6s and three Fw 190A-8s on 30 September, 15 Bf 109G-6s, 14 Bf 109G-14s and three Fw 190A-8s on 31 October, 13 Bf 109G-6s, 17 Bf 109G-14s, two Fw 190A-8s and two Ju 88G-1s (presumed to have been used as bomber stream 'shadowers') on 30 November and seven Bf 109G-6s, 20 Bf 109G-10s, 16 Bf 109G-14s, two Fw 190A-8s and a Ju 88G-1 on 31 December. In the equipment context, it is worth noting that one or more of NJG 11's *Staffeln* operated AS-model Bf 109Gs equipped with *Neptun* radar, and that at least two Bf 109K-4s (one allocated to Major Müller) were on the *Geschwader*'s strength during May 1945.

As alluded to earlier, II./NJG 11 was formed from 10./JG 300 at Jüterbog-Waldlager on 30 November 1944. At its formation, the *Gruppe* was under the command of Hauptmann Martin Finkeldey (who stayed in post until April 1945) and consisted of the unit's fourth, fifth and six *Staffeln*. Its aircraft inventory comprised one Bf 109G-5, 19 Bf 109G-10s and 14 Bf 109G-14s. A month later, the *Gruppe* was operational with 21 Bf 109G-6s, five Bf 109G-10s and 13 Bf 109G-14s. On 31 March 1945, II./NJG 11 was reduced to a single *Staffel* (designated 4./NJG 11), with its original fifth *Staffel* being absorbed by 7./NJG 11 at Köthen that same day. The remnants of the *Gruppe* were disbanded during April 1945.

Comprising the *Geschwader*'s seventh, eighth and ninth *Staffeln*, III./NJG 11 was formed on 4 January 1945 at Bonn-Hangelar under the command of Hauptmann Fritz E Krause. Here, 7./NJG 11 was established from parts of 3./NJG 11, 8./NJG 11 from 1./NJG 11 and 9./NJG 11 from parts of the *Ergänzungs-Nachtjagdgruppe*. On 31 March, III./NJG 11 was reduced to

Staffel status (as 7./NJG 11), absorbed 5./NJG 11 (which had been stationed at Köthen), 'took control' of 2./NJG 11 and may have been subordinate to NJG 2. Unlike NJG 11's other *Gruppen*, III./NJG 11 led a peripatetic life that involved moving from Bonn-Hangelar to Bad Lippspringe on 2 March, from Lippspringe to Oldenburg on 29 March (8./NJG 11 actually arrived at Oldenburg before the 29th, and is thought to have been an *Objektnachtjagd* specialist), from Oldenburg to Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel on 8 April and from Fuhlsbüttel to Leck on 2 May.

NJG 11's remaining sub-unit was Me 262-equipped 10./NJG 11, which (as noted earlier) was formed from *Kommando Welter* at Burg-Magdeburg on 28 January 1945. During its brief existence, the *Staffel* operated from Burg (until 12 April), Lübeck (until 21 April), Reinfeld (until 7 May) and Schleswig-Jagel, where it surrendered to the British.

A pre-war aviator, Major Friedrich-Karl 'Nasen' Müller was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 1./JG 300 in November 1943 and *Staffelkapitän* of 1./NJGr 10 three months later. He ended the war as *Kommandeur* of I./NJG 11, having claimed 30 night victories during the course of just 53 combat sorties (*EN Archive*)

Like other *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* units, NJG 11's effectiveness is difficult to assess. Identified claims were four Lancasters and two '4-motors' on the night of 12–13 September, and three Lancasters destroyed and three damaged following action on the nights of 2–3 and 4–5 November and 30 November–1 December. During the final month of 1944, the *Geschwader* claimed a total of one Halifax and five Lancasters destroyed, one Lancaster damaged and one Mosquito and one '4-motor' destroyed after combat on the nights of 4–5, 5–6, 9–10 and 12–13 December and 31 December–1 January. The Mosquito was claimed by 4./NJG 11's Feldwebel Fritz Reichenbach and is not corroborated by RAF loss records.

The *Geschwader*'s only known claim in January 1945 was Hauptmann Friedrich-Karl Müller's destruction of a Lancaster on the 14th–15th. The following month was more profitable, with claims for the destruction of a Halifax, two Lancasters, two '4-motors' and three Mosquitos on the nights of 21–22 and 24–25 February. As might be guessed, the Mosquitos were claimed by Oberleutnant Kurt Welter on 21–22 February – a night on which RAF Bomber Command lost no Mosquitos to enemy action.

A similar pattern continued into March, with claims being submitted for no less than nine Mosquitos. The first three of these were claimed by Welter on 2–3 March, followed by two more on 21–22 March. Here, RAF loss records indicate that no Mosquitos were lost to Luftwaffe fighters on 2–3 March, with only No 139 Sqn Mosquito B XX KB268 being damaged by *Flak* on the night in question. Similarly, no Mosquito losses can be found that match up with Welter's 'victories' on 21–22 March, with the only remotely genuine claim on that particular night being the one made by 10./NJG 11's Feldwebel Karl-Heinz Becker, who may have been responsible for the destruction of No 692 Sqn Mosquito B XVI PF392. Becker claimed two more Mosquitos on 23–24 March, with an unidentified member of the *Staffel* claiming a third. That night, the RAF lost two Mosquito B Mk XXs (No 139 Sqn's KB367 and KB390), with a third (No 692 Sqn Mosquito B IX MM133) being damaged.

During the last weeks of the war, NJG 11 flew a series of costly night ground attack missions, with I. *Gruppe* having targeted American forces in the Bamberg–Bayreuth area, while II. and III. *Gruppen* were credited with flying up to 64 such sorties between 1 February and 29–30 April.

In more detail, the period 3–4 to 24–25 April saw the *Geschwader* lose nine aircraft during ground attack missions. Of these, two Bf 109G-6s (including the aircraft of 4./NJG 11's Oberfeldwebel Willi Keller) are recorded as having failed to return from a strike in the Gotha area on 3–4 April; two Bf 109Gs were shot down in the Kassel–Hensfeld–Gotha area on 4–5 April; a Bf 109G failed to return from an attack in the Diepholz–Hoya–Verdun area on 7–8 April; a Bf 109G-6 and a Bf 109G-10 (flown by Leutnant Wolfgang Liwke) of 4./NJG 11 were lost in the Mühlhausen area on 8–9 April; another Bf 109G was brought down in the Hannover–Braunschweig area on 11–12 April; and a final Bf 109 failed to return from a sortie over the Dillinger–Bopfinger–Würzburg area on 24–25 April.

Aside from the creation of NJG 11, the Luftwaffe's ongoing commitment to single-engined nightfighters is evidenced by its retention of a *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* training organisation until the end of the war. Here, an *Ergänzungs-Nachtjagdstaffel* (Replacement Nightfighting Squadron, Erg.NJSt) was established at Ludwigslust on 1 April 1944. Under the command of Hauptmann Heinrich Spitzer, the *Staffel* was increased to *Gruppe* strength as *Ergänzungs-Nachtjagdgruppe (einmot)* (Single-Engined Replacement Nightfighter *Gruppe*, Erg.NJGr) on 27 July, with its constituent parts comprising a *Stab* and 1. and 2. *Staffeln*. Of these, 1./Erg.NJGr was the re-named Erg.NJSt, while 2./Erg.NJGr was a new formation, with the various elements being distributed between Neustadt-Glewe, Ludwigslust and Hagenow-Land.

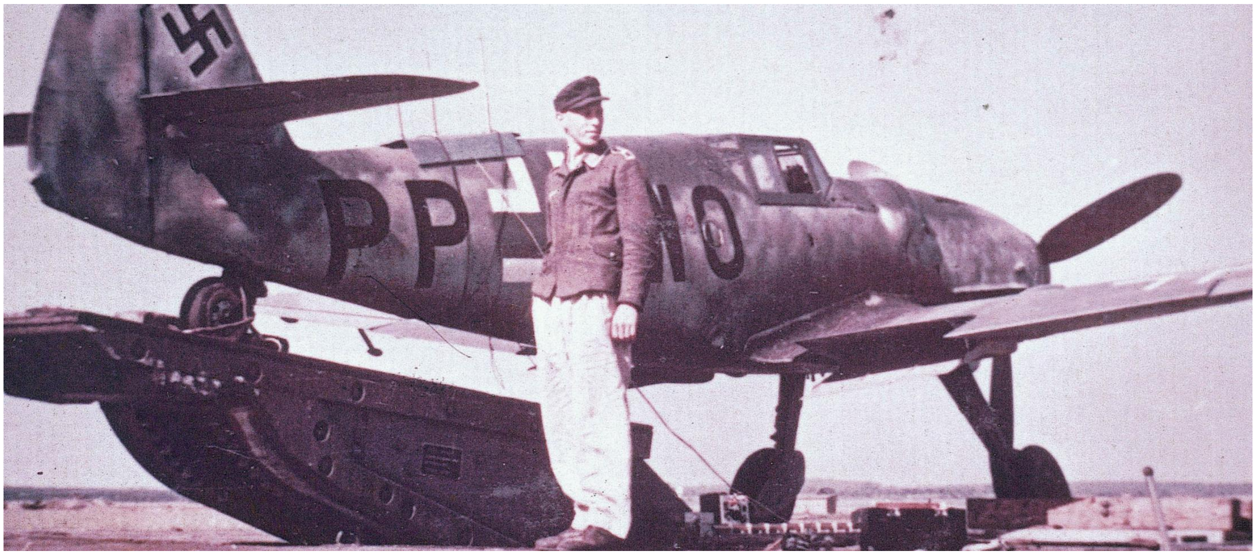
On 2 November 1944, the Erg.NJGr (with the addition of two more *Staffeln*) became I./*Ergänzungs-Jagdgeschwader* (Replacement JG, EJG) 2 under *Geschwaderkommodore* Oberstleutnant Werner Andres. I./EJG 2 became II./EJG 1 on 20 March 1945. As I./EJG 2 (between 2 November 1944 and 20 March 1945), it was based at various locations, including Ludwigslust, Neustad-Glewe (1./EJG 2) and Hagenow-Land (2./EJG 2). In terms of inventory, I./EJG 2 was able to muster two Bf 109G-5s, 35 Bf 109G-6s, six Bf 109G-6/ASs, five Bf 109G-14s, a Bf 109T, two Fw 190A-3s, two Fw 190A-4s, three Fw 190A-6s and 13 Fw 190A-8s on 31 December 1944.

As was frequently the case within the Luftwaffe's nightfighter training complex, 2./EJG 2 is reported to have raised a detachment of three Bf 109G/AS fighters for operational *Moskito-Jagd* sorties. Here, the machines were coded 'Grün (Green) 5', '6' and '7', with 'Grün 5' being flown by 2./EJG 2's *Staffelkapitän*, Oberleutnant Manfred Dieterle. Initially, Dieterle had requested that ‘Grün 5’ should be stripped of its paintwork and polished for maximum speed. After a period so adorned, ‘Grün 5’ was eventually painted gloss black overall. As of February 1945, Dieterle had left EJG 2 to become the *Staffelkapitän* of one of the Eastern Front nightfighter units.

CHAPTER FIVE

TECHNOLOGY

While the idea of buccaneering pilots racing to their aircraft, roaring off into the night and clawing down the enemy's 'terror' bombers, whatever the cost, might have appealed to the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda's* (*Reich* Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda) and coloured its pronouncements on the *Wilde Sau*, the reality of *helle nachtjagd* ('bright night' fighting)/*Objektnachtjagd/Wilde Sau* operations was totally different.



Bf 109G PP+NO acted as a Neptun AI radar trials aircraft at Werneuchan, for which it was fitted with a three-rod antenna array scabbed onto its rear fuselage (*Chris Goss Collection*)

At the most basic level, flying high-performance, single-seat fighters at night was both difficult and dangerous. Once in the air, the single-seat nightfighters had to fly in frequently very poor meteorological conditions, with their pilots having to understand and execute orders from the ground, locate and attack the enemy while often under fire from both their quarry and/or their own ground defences, and then find somewhere to make a safe landing. Such a workload was sometimes nearly impossible, and was only practical with the increasing use of technology and specialised tactics and the support of an extensive and well-organised back-up system.

In the six years between 1939 and 1945, the Luftwaffe made use of the Ar 68, Bf 109, Fw 190 and the Me 262 as single-seat nightfighters, of which the Ar 68 was the service's last biplane fighter. In its Ar 68F configuration (which was used by the various *nachtstaffeln* during 1939–40, see **Chapter One**), the fighter was powered by a 750 hp BMW VI in-line engine and armed with a pair of 7.9 mm MG 17 machine guns.

No fewer than 16 sub-variants of the Bf 109 were issued to the various *helle nachtjagd*/*Objektnachtjagd*/*Wilde Sau* units, with the first model to be so used being the 960 hp DB 600A-powered Bf 109D-1. Armed with a single 20 mm MG FF/M cannon and two MG 17s, some of the nightfighting D-models are reported to have been flown with their canopies removed to provide better all-round vision.

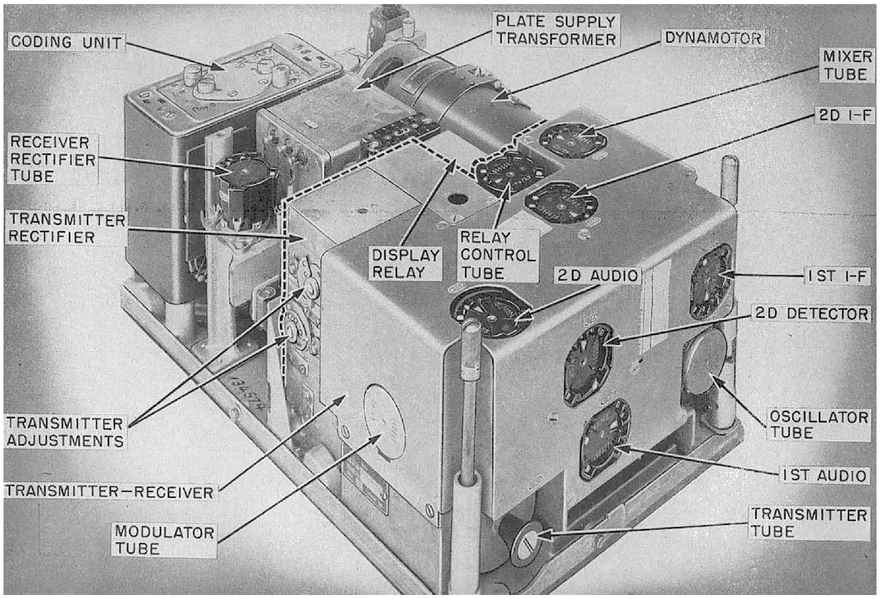
The last of the first-generation Bf 109s, the E-model was powered by either an 1100 hp DB 601A or a 1200 hp DB 601N inline engine and featured a three- or four-gun armament (consisting of MG 17s and MG FFs) depending on sub-type. In its DB 601N-powered Bf 109E-7 configuration, the type also had provision for a drop tank to extend its range.

On the Eastern Front, JG 54 flew *helle nachtjagd* sorties (see **Chapter One**) with a mixture of Bf 109F-2, F-4 and G-2 fighters. Of these, the DB 601N-powered Bf 109F-2 incorporated a re-designed (when compared with the Bf 109E) nose section and was armed with two MG 17s and a 15 mm MG 151/15 heavy machine gun mounted between the cylinder blocks of its engine. Radio equipment comprised the FuG VIIa and the FuG 25 'identification friend or foe' (IFF) transponder, and (like the E-7) the F-2 could carry a 300-litre drop tank. The Bf 109F-4 introduced a 1350 hp DB 601E engine, it was armed with two MG 17s and a 20 mm MG 151/20 cannon and could carry a drop tank. The last of this trio, the Bf 109G-2 was powered by a 1475 hp DB 605A engine, had enlarged main and tail wheels, a FuG VIIa radio and a FuG 25 IFF transceiver and was armed with two MG 17s and an MG 151/20.

The Bf 109G-3 was a version of the G-2 with a pressurised cockpit that was flown in the *Wilde Sau* role by both JGs 300 and 301. The Bf 109G-4 was another G-2 derivative that was fitted with a FuG 16 Z radio, could carry a 300-litre drop tank and could be armed with an additional pair of MG 151/20 cannon mounted in underwing gondolas. The G-4 is known to have been flown by JG 300 and III./JG 11 (as an *Aufsitzergruppe* donor, see **Chapter Three**), as was the pressurised Bf 109G-5.

The first of the Bf 109 *beule* (bump) variants, the G-5 introduced a pair of 13 mm MG 131 heavy machine guns in place of the G-4's MG 17s – an installation that required external fairings to accommodate them (hence the *beule* nickname). Again, the G-5 had a presssurised cockpit, was equipped with the FuG 16 ZY transceiver and could be fitted with the GM-1 nitrous-oxide power boost system. Other nightfighter use of the G-5 was by III./JG 11 (in the *Aufsitzergruppe* context), and it is tempting to speculate that the fielding of the pressurised G-3 and G-5 was predicated by the need for an enhanced altitude capability during *Moskito-Jagd* missions.

The Bf 109G-6 was one of the two (alongside the Fw 190A) workhorses of the mid- to late-war single-engined nightfighter force, and it was flown in the *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* role by EJG 2, JGs 300, 301 and 302, NJG 11 and NJGr 10, together with II./JG 27 and III./JG 11 in the *Aufsitzergruppe* context. Essentially the unpressurised counterpart of the G-5, the G-6 was fitted with FuG 25 A and FuG 16 ZY, could carry a 300-litre drop tank (G-6/R3) and a pair of underwing MG 151/20 cannon (G-6/R6) and could be fitted with either the GM-1 (G-6/U2) or the MW-50 methanol-water (G-6/U3) power boosting systems. The R6 configuration was effectively standard in the nocturnal *Wilde Sau* role (as was the use of a drop tank), with the cannon gondolas being removed for daylight operations.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RELAY CONTROL TUBE
2D AUDIO
1ST I-F
2D DETECTOR
OSCILLATOR TUBE
TRANSMITTER ADJUSTMENTS
1ST AUDIO
TRANSMITTER—RECEIVER
TRANSMITTER TUBE
MODULATOR TUBE

The FuG 25 A IFF transponder was designed (as its role suggests) to identify its host aircraft as being 'friendly' when displayed on a range of German ground radars, including the *Freya* and *Würzburg* types. The annotated view shown here is from a contemporaneous Allied identification manual (*Author's Collection*)

In addition to the foregoing, nightfighting G-6s could be seen with a revised larger fin and rudder (to counter increasing engine torque), the *Erla-haube* (Erla hood) clear view cockpit canopy, a 30 mm MK 108 cannon (G-6/U4) in place of the aircraft's standard MG 151/20 motor cannon and the 1670 hp DB 605AS engine in place of the type's standard DB 605A. When so fitted, the aircraft featured a new nose profile to accommodate the DB 605AS's larger supercharger, becoming known as the Bf 109G-6/AS. Such aircraft were further identified by their standard use of the enlarged fin and rudder noted earlier and the *Erla-haube*. Again, nightfighting G-6/ASs have been logged as having their cockpit head armour removed to reduce the aircraft's weight (thereby improving overall performance). Research suggests that at least 273 of the Bf 109G-6/AS fighters that were converted from earlier G-models were equipped with the GM-1 power boosting system.

The DB 605AS (as an alternative to the 1800 hp DB 605E) also powered the Bf 109G-10, which was used as a nightfighter by NJG 11. Known with typical German earthiness as a *Bastardkämpfer* (bastard fighter), the Bf 109G-10 could either be a conversion of an earlier G-model or (to a lesser extent) a new-build aircraft. Externally, the G-10 looked like the G-6/AS, and when fitted with a DB 605E, it was equipped with MW-50 power boosting. FuG 16 ZY was standard, and it could carry a 300-litre drop tank (G-10/R3) as well as be equipped with a PKS 12 single-axis autopilot (controlling its rudder) in its G-10/R6 form. As operated by NJG 11, the *Geschwader*'s G-10s appear to have been regularly fitted with exhaust shrouds, together with a small clear view window on the port side of their *Erla-hauben* and a rear-view mirror above their cockpits.

The Bf 109G-14 (which was flown by EJG 2, JG 300 and NJG 11) was intended to be a *Standardausführung* (standard type) that combined many of the changes that had appeared during G-6 production into a single configuration. As might be guessed, this did not happen, with G-14s being fitted with DB 605A, DB 605AM (the DB 605A with MW-50 boost) and DB 605AS (designated as the Bf 109G-14/AS) engines, together with both Bf 109G standard and enlarged fins and rudders. The *Erla haube* canopy and *Peilrufanglagen* (direction-finding systems) were consistently fitted and the G-14 could carry the ubiquitous 300-litre drop tank, was equipped with 660 × 190 mm main wheels and the FuG 16 ZY radio. It could also have its 20 mm motor cannon replaced by a 30 mm MK 108 weapon (G-14/U4).

The Bf 109's use as a single-seat nightfighter was completed by the issue of the Bf 109K-4 to NJG 11 and at least one Bf 109T to both JG 300 and EJG 2. In chronological order, the Bf 109T was a DB 601N-powered Bf 109E derivative that had been designed for use aboard the never-completed *Graf Zeppelin* aircraft carrier. As such it was equipped with an arrester hook and an increased wingspan. Interestingly, 'Hajo' Herrmann records having flown an operational *Wilde Sau* mission in such an aircraft.

The remaining sub-variant (Bf 109K-4) was supplied to NJG 11 towards the end of the war and was powered by a DB 605D engine. Distinctive features included main- and tail-wheel bay doors, the enlarged fin and rudder configuration, use of the *Erla haube* and 660 × 190 mm main wheels, together with some re-arrangement of its fuselage access hatches. Onboard equipment included the FuG 16 ZY radio, FuG 25 A IFF transponder and *Peilrufanlage* provision, while the model's armament comprised two MG 131 machine guns and a MK 108 cannon. Again, the K-4 could carry the usual 300-litre drop tank (K-4/R3).

The Fw 190 was sometimes referred to as the 'preferred' *Wilde Sau* fighter, with the *Objektnachtjagd*/*Wilde Sau* units making use of 14 sub-variants of the A and G series fighters and fighter-bombers as nightfighters. The earliest Fw 190A *nachtjäger* was the 1700 hp BMW 801D-2-powered A-4, which was used as a nightfighter by II./JG 1, I./JG 11 and II./JG 54 (all in the *Aufsitzergruppe* context), I. and III./JG 2, the NJVK, IV./NJG 3 and I./SKG 10 (see **Chapters One** and **Two** for details of the last four).

As such, the A-4 was armed with a pair of MG 17s, a pair of MG 151/20s and had provision for another pair of MG FF cannon in its outboard wing positions. FuG 16 Z radio and FuG 25 IFF were fitted and the model could carry a 300-litre drop tank. In its A-4/U8 configuration (which was flown by I./SKG 10), the aircraft was equipped with a ventral ETC 501 bomb rack and two underwing racks for a pair of 300-litre drop tanks. So equipped, the A-4/U8 (which was subsequently re-designated the Fw 190G-1) was only capable of a maximum speed of 480 km/h.

Like the Bf 109G-14, the Fw 190A-5 was a *Standardausführung* model that introduced a 160 mm plug between the rear of its engine cowling and the front of its fuselage to improve engine cooling. Flown as a nightfighter by II./JG 1, I./JG 11 and II./JG 54 (all in the *Aufsitzergruppe* context), I. and III./JG 2, JGs 300, 301 and 302, IV./NJG 3, NJGr 10, the NJVK, SAGr 128 (see **Chapter One**) and I./SKG 10, the A-5 also featured improved cockpit instrumentation, a gun camera, *Kuto Nase* balloon cable cutting provision and a Revi C/12d gunsight.

In addition to the baseline A-5, use was also made (by I./SKG 10 and possibly III./JG 2) of the Fw 190A-5/U8 *Jagdbomber mit vergrösserter Reichweit* (fighter-bomber with increased range, *Jabo-Rei*). Here, the aircraft was fitted with *Verkleidetes Messerschmitt Schloss* (faired Messerschmitt wing racks, *V.Mitt-Schloss*) stores carriers beneath its wings for a pair of drop tanks with which to extend the range. Other features included an ETC 501 fuselage bomb rack, a variometer (climb and descent indicator) and a gun/cannon armament of two MG 17s, two MG 151/20s and two MG FFs or two MG 17s and two MG 151/20s. With the bomb and *V.Mitt-Schloss* racks in place, the A-5/U8 was between 18 and 72 km/h slower than the A-5 fighter, and its use in the *Wilde Sau* role was predicated on its increased range.

The BMW 801D-2-powered Fw 190A-6 (which was flown in the nightfighter role by II./JG 1, I./JG 11 and II./JG 54 (all in the *Aufsitzergruppe* context), I. and III./JG 2, JGs 300, 301 and 302 and NJGr 10, see **Chapters Two** and **Three**) replaced the A-5's outboard pair of wing-mounted MG FF cannon with another pair of MG 151/20 weapons with 140 rounds per gun. Other features included the cockpit variometer and an EK 16 gun camera, and the type is credited with a maximum speed of 650 km/h at an altitude of 6000 m. Again, the A-6 was very heavily armed, with its pair of MG 17 machine guns having 900 rounds per gun, while its inboard MG 151/20s had 250 rounds per gun.

The Fw 190A-7 (which was flown by both JGs 301 and 302) was similar to the A-6 with the exception of the replacement of the latter's MG 17s with a pair of 13 mm MG 131 weapons with 475 rounds per gun. Other features included simplified wiring, a Revi 16b gunsight, a 380 × 150 mm tail wheel and provision for the carriage of a 300-litre drop tank.

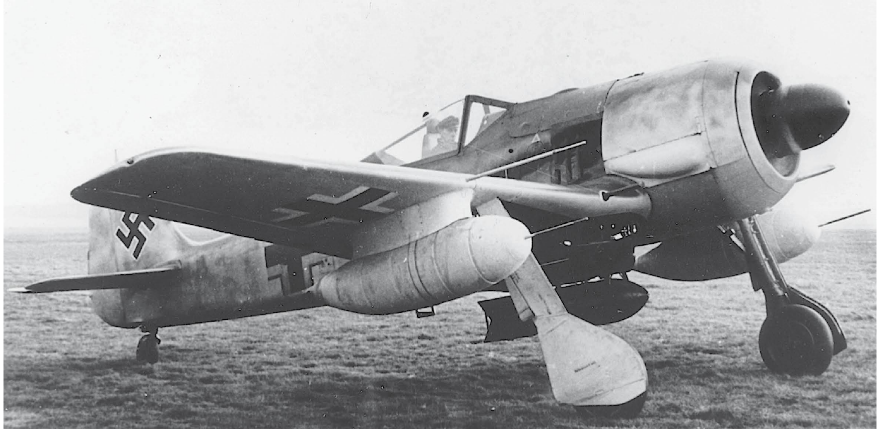
Flown in the nightfighter role by JGs 300 and 302, NJG 11 and NJGr 10, the Fw 190A-8 was based on the A-7 and incorporated a 115-litre fuel tank in its rear fuselage, FuG 16 ZY radio, a vertical speed indicator, a PKS 11 or 12 directional control unit, a ventral ETC 501 or 504 ventral rack (for a 300-litre drop tank), a gun camera and a gun/cannon armament that comprised two MG 131s (with 475 rounds per gun) and four MG 151/20Es (250 rounds per gun inboard, 140 rounds per gun outboard). Again, the A-8's fuselage fuel tank could be replaced by an 85-litre GM-1 or a 140-litre MW-50 tank if either boost system was installed. Elsewhere, the Fw 190 A-8/R2 variant (which served with JG 300) replaced the standard model's outboard MG 151/20Es with a pair of 30 mm MK 108 cannon with 55 rounds per gun.

JG 300 was also equipped with the 2200 hp BMW 801F- or the 2000 hp BMW 801S-powered Fw 190A-9. In other respects, the A-9 was generally similar to the A-8 apart from the introduction of an armoured oil tank. So configured, the A-9 had a maximum speed of 640 km/h at 6000 m.

As noted earlier, the *Wilde Sau* units made use of *Jabo* and *Jabo-Rei* Fw 190 models as a means of increasing the range of their aircraft. Aside from the already described A-4/U8 and A-5/U8s, the Fw 190F-8 *Jabo* and Fw 190G-2, G-3, G-8 and G-8/R5 *Jabo-Rei* aircraft were also assigned to JG 300 and SKG 10.

The Fw 190F-8 (which was used by both JG 300 and SKG 10) was based on the A-8 fighter and was equipped with GM-1 power boost, the FuG 16 ZS radio (incorporating the ZVG 16 homing unit), a gun/cannon armament of two MG 131s and two MG 151/20s, a ventral ETC 501 stores rack and four ETC 503 racks beneath its wings. For its part, the G-2 *Jabo-Rei* (which was flown by JG 300) appears to have been based on the Fw 190A-5 and was equipped with a ventral ETC 501 rack together with a pair of *V.Mitt-Schloss* racks beneath the wings. With a 300-litre drop tank on each of these wing carriers, the G-2 was able to achieve a maximum speed of 602 km/h. In its G-2/N configuration, the aircraft was optimised for night operations. As such, it was fitted with exhaust flame dampers that slightly reduced its maximum speed. Images of the type of flame dampers fitted to this sub-variant suggest that despite its suitability, the G-2/N was not used in the *Wilde Sau* role.

The Fw 190G-3 (which was flown as a nightfighter by both JG 300 and SKG 10) was a development of the Fw 190A-5/U13 sub-variant. It was fitted with a ventral ETC 501 bomb rack and two Focke-Wulf designed wing racks (designated as *V.Fw-Trg*. units). So equipped (and with two underwing 300-litre drop tanks), the G-3 could achieve a speed of 605 km/h. As was the case with the G-2, a specialised night variant of the G-3 was developed under the G-3/N designation. Here, the aircraft was fitted with exhaust flame dampers, a Zeiss wing-mounted searchlight, ultra-violet cockpit lighting and a PKS 11 autopilot. As is the case with the G-2/N, it is not known whether the G-3/N was used as a nightfighter.



Although designed as a *Jabo-Rei* long-range fighter-bomber, the Fw 190G series' ability to carry underwing 300-litre drop tanks led to the type's use in the *Wilde Sau* role. The additional fuel available in the Fw 190G gave the individual *Wilde Sau* interceptor a useful boost in endurance – a parameter which was of considerable importance, bearing in mind the wide geographical range of many *Wilde Sau* sorties (*Chris Goss Collection*)

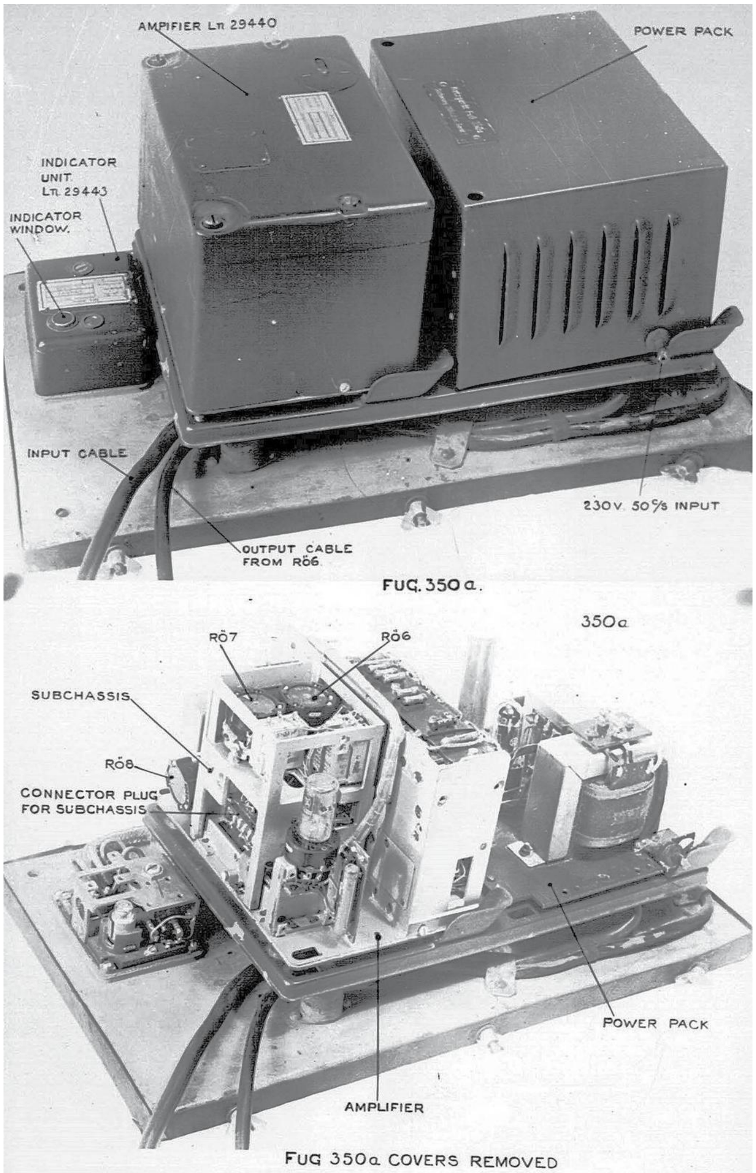
Elsewhere, the Fw 190G-8 (which was used by JG 300) incorporated FuG 16 ZY radio, GM-1 power boost, PKS 11 or 12 directional control, *Kuto Nase* provision, the 380 × 150 mm tail wheel, a Zeiss 130 E searchlight and ventral (ETC 501) and underwing (four ETC 503) stores racks. When carrying a pair of 300-litre drop tanks, the G-3's top speed was reduced by 6 km/h. In its G-8/R5 configuration (flown by SKG 10), the aircraft was equipped with pairs of ETC 50 or ETC 71 underwing stores racks and had *Kuto Nase* and PKS directional control provision.

The Luftwaffe's final single-seat nightfighter was the jet-propelled Me 262A-1a. Flown by both *Kommando Welter* and 10./NJG 11, the Me 262A-1a was powered by a pair of Jumo 109-004B-1 (900 kg static thrust) or (possibly) B-4 (1000 kg static thrust) turbojets. The fighter was armed with a quartet of 30 mm Mk 108 cannon in its nose (upper weapons 100 rounds per gun, lower weapons 80 rounds per gun).

Capable of achieving a maximum speed of 870 km/h at 6000 m, the Me 262A-1a's performance was ideal for *Moskito-Jagd.* However, it proved to be too fast for the effective interception of the RAF's four-engined bombers. Again, the fuel consumption of the aircraft's turbojets was such as to limit the A-1a's maximum range to 600 km at 6000 m, and it is believed that some alterations were made to the cockpit lighting for aircraft that were used at night in the *Moskito-Jagd* role.

Alongside the Me 262A-1a, 10./NJG 11 was also issued with eight Me 262B-1a/U1 two-seat nightfighters that were based on the Me 262B-1a two-seat trainer (see **Chapter Four**). When compared with the Me 262B-1a, the B-1a/U1's rear seat is reported to have been moved forward to accommodate additional fuel, with the type's internal fuel capacity being given as 2,070 litres. An additional pair of 300-litre external tanks were carried under the aircraft's nose and the type's electronics fit is thought to have included the FuG 16 ZY radio, the FuG 25 A IFF transponder and the FuG 218 V2 AI radar (see following). Again, provision for a FuG 120 *Bernhardine* ground-to-air teleprinter system and the FuG 350 *Naxos Z* centimetric radar homing and warning equipment is understood to have been available.

The type's standard armament is logged as having been four 30 mm MK 108 cannon (as per the Me 262A-1a single-seater), although one aircraft (Wk-Nr 110307) appears to have been equipped with a pair of forward-firing 20 mm MG 151/20s in place of the usual MK 108s. Elsewhere, another example (Wk-Nr 110306) is said to have had a twin MG 151/20 *Schräge Musik* installation.


AMPIFIER Ln 29440
POWER PACK
INDICATOR UNIT Ln 29443
INDICATOR WINDOW.
INPUT CABLE
OUTPUT CABLE FROM RÖ6
230V. 50 ~/s INPUT
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350a
RÖ7
RÖ6
SUBCHASSIS
RÖ8
CONNECTOR PLUG FOR SUBCHASSIS
POWER PACK
AMPLIFIER
FUG 350a COVERS REMOVED

The ‘black boxes’ associated with the FuG 350 *Naxos* centimetric band radar homer were small enough to be fitted into a *Wilde Sau* type nightfighter. As far as is known, such equipment was only installed aboard trials aircraft and perhaps one or two operational fighters (*Author’s Collection*)

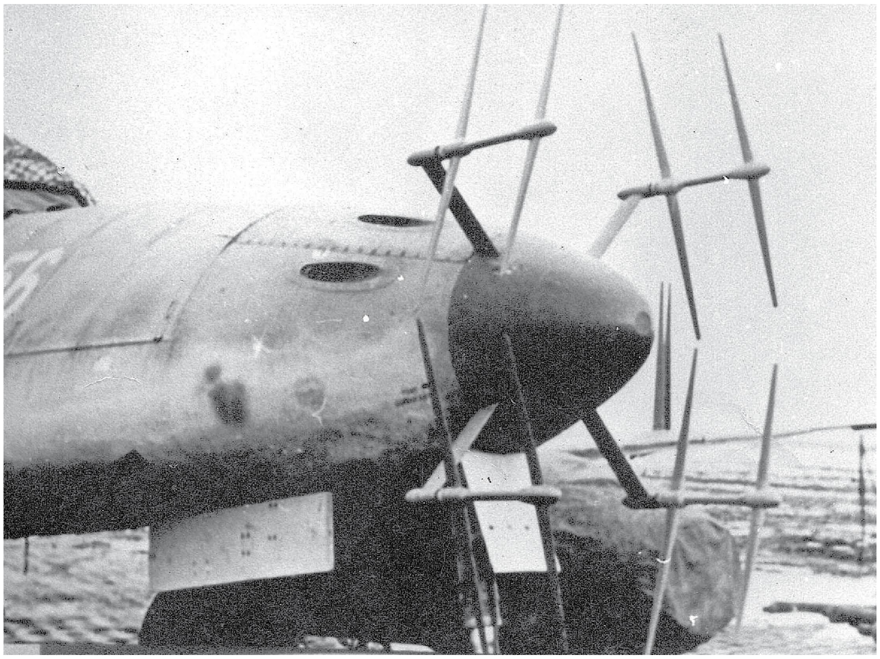
As might be expected, the B-1a/U1 was heavier and more aerodynamically compromised (by its *Hirschgeweihe* (deer’s antlers) antenna array and external fuel tanks) than the Me 262 as a single-seater, a situation that resulted in it being more difficult to fly. A particular problem encountered by both variants was the tendency of the turbojets to ‘flame out’ if their throttles were opened or closed too quickly.

The use of *Jabo* and *Jabo-Rei* models as interceptors with improved endurance hints at rather more specialisation than Herrmann's concept of using standard day fighters as nightfighters. As early as I./JG *Herrmann*, the unit's Bf 109s were being fitted with a reserve turn-and-bank indicator (with its own power supply); provision for a drop tank; provision for a cockpit-mounted flare pistol; the installation of underwing cannon; the installation of an electrically heated windscreen; some re-arrangement of the aircraft's flight instruments; upgrading of the aircraft's direction-finding display (to provide an instrument landing system capability); and installation of the FuG 25 A IFF transponder.

Regarding cockpit instrumentation, some of the innovations introduced by JG *Herrmann* are understood to have been adopted universally, with a standard production Bf 109G-6 cockpit containing a repeater compass, an artificial horizon/turn-and-bank indicator, a rate of climb/descent indicator, an AFN 2 homing indicator (used with the FuG 16 ZY radio), an altimeter and an airspeed indicator. This arrangement remained standard up to and including the last variant to see service before the end of the war, the Bf 109K-4. The equivalent for a standard Fw 190A-8 included an airspeed indicator, an artificial horizon/turn-and-bank indicator, a repeater compass, the AFN 2 homing indicator and ultra-violet cockpit lighting.

Over time, other modifications included the introduction of teardrop-shaped exhaust flame shields and fuselage machine gun muzzle shrouds on some Fw 190s, while a number of Bf 109s benefitted from exhaust shrouds and the *Eberspächer* aural warning system. In order, all Bf 109F, G and K aircraft were fitted as standard with a shield over their portside exhaust stubs to prevent gases from entering the aircraft's supercharger air intake. On *Wilde Sau/Objektnachtjagd* aircraft, this was enlarged (so as to cover the entire exhaust block) and was fitted on both sides of the aircraft's engine.

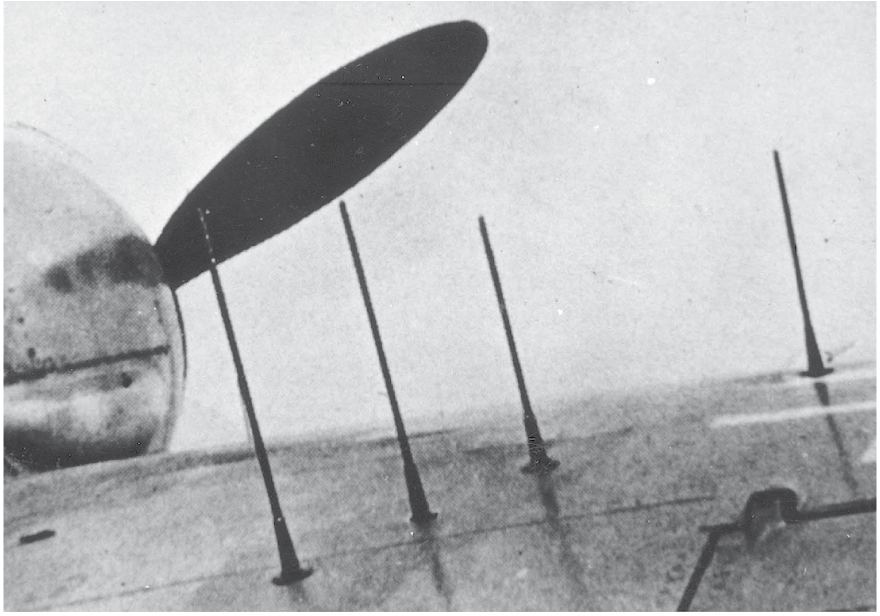
Associated with this shielding was the *Eberspächer* aural warning device that was designed to identify a *Wilde Sau* fighter as being friendly when approaching a *Flak*-defended airfield. As such, this device (termed an 'acoustic exhaust pipe') was a Bosch-developed whistle that was installed on the first exhaust stack on each side of the Bf 109's engine, and which was operated by means of a moveable sphere-shaped stopper that was opened or closed by the pilot using a Bowden cable link. While effective, *Eberspächer* appears to have become available just as 30.*Jagddivision* was being disbanded (see **Chapter Two**), and was, as a consequence, little used. The concept may have been revived later in the war, and it is perhaps worth noting that the last exhaust shroud configuration applied to Bf 110G-4 nightfighters was also termed an *Eberspächer* installation.



When installed in 10./NJG 11's Me 262B-1a/U1 fighters, the FuG 218 AI radar made use of the four-element *Hirschgeweihe* array as shown here fitted to the Me 262 V056 prototype (*Chris Goss Collection*)

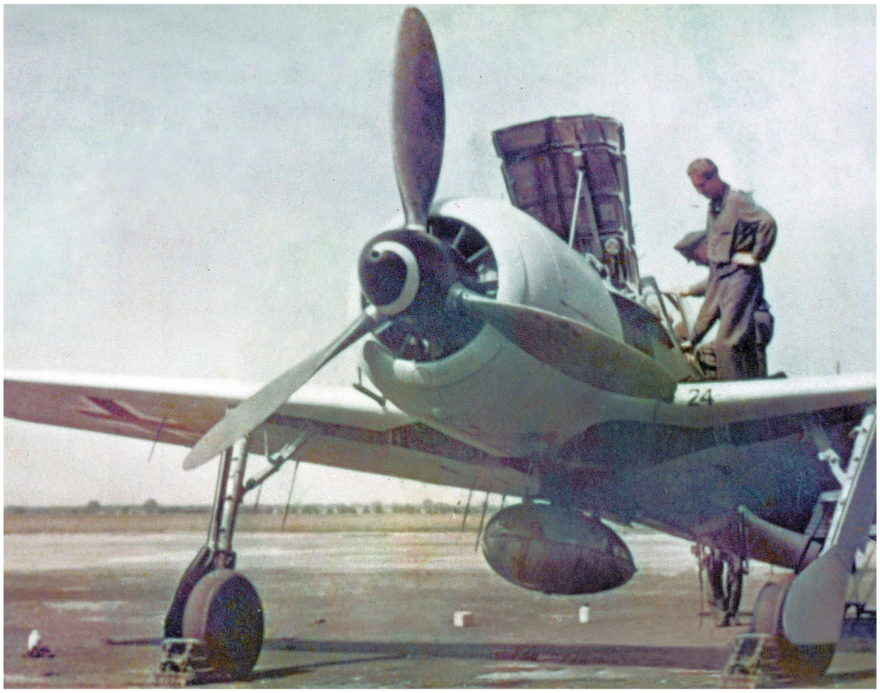
Elsewhere, *Wilde Sau* aircraft are reported to have been fitted with a 220 V AC ER 3 receiver that was used to listen in to the *Anna Maria* forces broadcast station when it was being used to transmit a musical code to identify RAF bomber targets when the radio 'running commentary' was being jammed. The ER 3 incorporated its own rectifier, and drew power from the host aircraft's electrical system. As an aside (and when in France), the pilots of JG 301 removed this equipment from their aircraft and set it up to play music in their quarters!

Another *Wilde Sau* modification may have been the use of the FuBl 2 *Funkblindlandegerät* (radio blind landing device) system by JGs 300 and 302. Here, FuBl 2 used a visual indicator (together with Morse 'dot' and 'dash' steering signals in the pilot's headphones), and its EBL 2 receiver was teamed with either a remotely tuned EBL 3 F or a manually tuned EBL 3 H radio beacon receiver, both of which operated in the 30-33.3 MHz band. Again, the system incorporated a neon radio beacon indicator and was identified externally by the presence of a ‘towel rail’ antenna beneath the host aircraft’s fuselage. It must be stressed that this modification is speculative, and if used, may have been connected with late-war ‘bad weather’ fighter operations by JGs 300 and 302.



A close-up of four *Neptun* AI radar rod antennas mounted on the upper wing surface of an Fw 190. Such arrays would be carried on both the aircraft’s port and starboard wings, and they were used to detect echo signals in azimuth (*Chris Goss Collection*)

On firmer ground is the installation of *Neptun* AI radar aboard increasing numbers of Bf 109 and Fw 190 nightfighters. As set out in Chapter One, the first such installations were made in five Fw 190A aircraft that were assigned to JG 2 in the autumn of 1943. After examining all the available evidence, the *Neptun* variant most likely to have been installed aboard these fighters was the FuG 216 *Neptun V*.



Fw 190A-5 Wk-Nr 181703 is reported to have been used for FuG 216 Neptun R tail-warning radar trials at the Rechlin test centre in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Points to note are the multi-rod antenna array on the undersurface of the aircraft's starboard wing, the non-standard overall RLM 76 paint scheme and the code number '24' on the leading edge of its port wing (*Chris Goss Collection*)

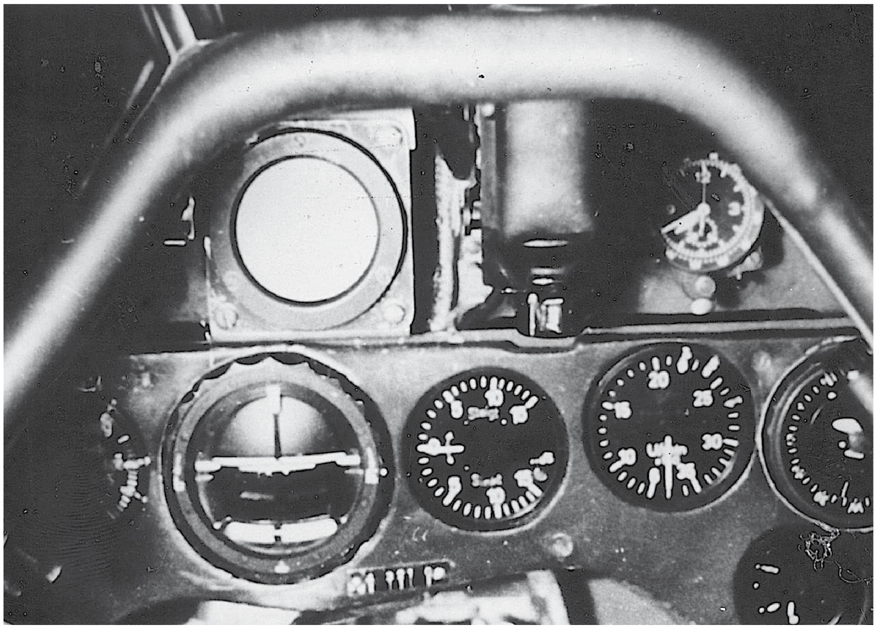
A system developed jointly by the *Flugfunkforschungsinstitut Oberpfaffenhofen* (Oberpfaffenhofen Airborne Radio Research Institute, FFO) and Siemens, *Neptun V* was created from components used in FuG 216 tail-warning radars. It used an antenna array that comprised pairs of dipoles and reflectors that were installed horizontally on the leading edge of the host aircraft's port wing and one above the other on the leading edge of its starboard wing. A complex architecture allowed these arrays to be used for both transmission and reception (thereby obviating the need for dedicated transmission and reception aerials), and azimuth and elevation responses from a target were shown on a two-cathode ray tube (CRT) display that was mounted within the Fw 190's instrument panel. Range was three to five kilometres.

While effective, *Neptun V* was not well received due to the difficulties inherent in having to read data from two CRTs while trying to fly a single-seat fighter, the drag produced by the set's antenna arrays and the fact that it could not be fitted to the Bf 109 (which had wing slats that precluded the installation of antenna on the leading edges of its wings).

Accordingly, the FFO/Siemens team developed an improved version which (confusingly) was designated as the FuG 217 J *Neptun II J* and then the FuG 217 J1 *Neptun II J1*. *Neptun II J1* replaced the *Neptun V*'s relatively clumsy aerial array with a new assembly that was based around vertical *Stachelschwein* (Porcupine) rod antennas. Here (and as installed aboard the Fw 190), groups of rod aerials were located on the host's wings (to determine target azimuth), above and below its fuselage (to establish target elevation) and above its nose (the radar's transmission array).

Operating in the 158–187 MHz band, *Neptun II J1* used a single CRT display that in the Fw 190 was installed on the port side of the pilot's instrument panel above the aircraft's artificial horizon/turn-and-bank indicator. Pilot operation only required the equipment to be switched on, with bearing and elevation displays (both using linear time bases) being selected by means of a push button on the pilot's control column. Detection range is given as having been between 300 m and five kilometres, and the radar was installed in both Bf 109s and Fw 190s.

While the foregoing is believed to be accurate, and it is known that *Neptun II J1* was the most widely fielded by single-seat nightfighters, the equipment appears to have utilised at least three types of *Stachelschwein* antenna combinations. Aside from the described four location Fw 190 fit, there are photographs of Fw 190As with three rods on their fuselage noses, three above their rear fuselages and four above each wing, while others show a wing-only configuration that features three rods per upper wing (Fw 190A-6 Wk-Nr 550214 being an example). Other images show late-model Bf 109s with three rods beneath their engine cowlings (offset to port) and four under each wing.



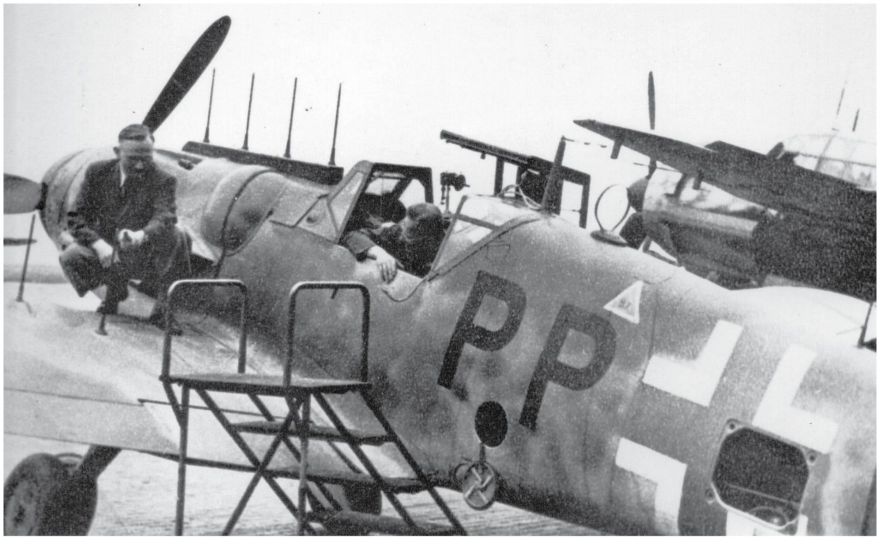
When installed in the Fw 190A, the CRT display for both the *Neptun II* and *III* radars was mounted to the left in the pilot's main instrument panel above the aircraft's artificial horizon (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Further confusion arises from FuG 218 V1 *Neptun III V1*'s initial use of a *Stachelschwein* array that was very similar to that of *Neptun II J1*. Like the earlier set, *Neptun III V1* was designed for use aboard single-seat fighters, featuring (in pre-production form) a four-rod transmission array ahead of the cockpit and rear hemisphere coverage. Again, the equipment introduced new controls and a new transmitter and receiver, and *Neptun III V1* could have its operating frequency changed on the ground. With a peak power of 1.5 to 2 kW, *Neptun III V1* (which was also known as FuG 218 J *Neptun III J* or *Neptun J3*) had an air-to-air range of up to five kilometres, a close-up resolution of 120 m (the *Neptun II J1*'s figure was 200 m) and was intended to have had a passive (*Halbe* or half) mode with which to home onto enemy jamming aircraft.

Bizarrely (bearing in mind its drag-inducing qualities), the production version of *Neptun III V1/III J/J3* is reported to have utilised a *Hirschgeweihe* array like that used with the FuG 216 *Neptun V*. At this remove, it is uncertain how many (if any) *Neptun III Js* were used operationally.

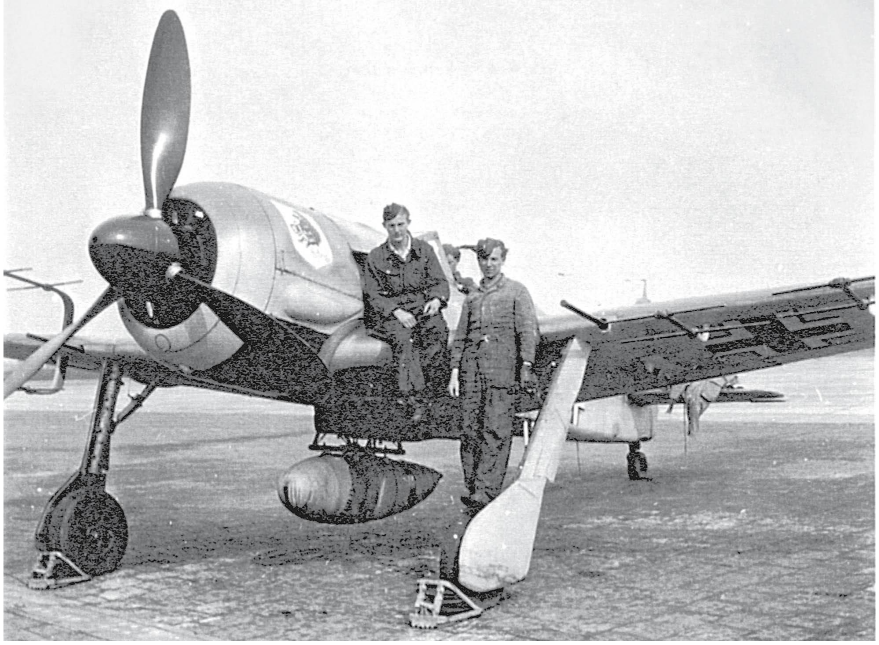
The final operational *Moskito-Jagd Neptun* radar was the FuG 218 V2 *Neptun III V* which was installed in 10./NJG 11's Me 262B-1a/U1s. As such, the 162–187 MHz band *Neptun III V* utilised a nose-mounted *Hirschgeweihe* array, was fitted with a single CRT display, had a peak power of 2 kW, a maximum range of five kilometres and offered elevation and azimuth accuracies of ± two degrees, respectively.

Outside these three radars, considerable experimentation was undertaken to equip *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* fighters with electronic aids to target detection, with examples being a Bf 109G (coded ‘NH+VZ’) fitted with a *Naxos* centimetric radar homer/warner; Fw 190A-6 Wk-Nr 530380 fitted with a 420–480 MHz FuG 212 *Lichtenstein C-1* AI radar; Me 262 V056 which was equipped with FuG 218 AI radar and a FuG 226 IFF set; and Fw 190A-5 Wk-Nr 181703 which was used to test the 182 MHz centre frequency FuG 216 *Neptun R* tail-warning radar (four rod antennas per wing). Finally, Bf 109G ‘PP+NO’ was photographed with a three-rod *Neptun*-type array scabbed onto its rear fuselage.



Before reverting to a *Hirschgeweihe* (deer’s antlers) antenna arrangement, the prototype *Neptun III J* AI radar utilised a rod aerial array similar to that used with the *Neptun II J1* equipment. Here, a prototype four-rod *Neptun III J* transmission array has been mounted on the nose of a Bf 109G trials aircraft at Werneuchan (*Chris Goss Collection*)

As set out in Chapter One, JG 2 was the first unit to make use of *Neptun*-equipped Fw 190s, followed by JG 300, who received its first such aircraft on 30 December 1943. By January–February 1944, six *Neptun* Fw 190s were available, with a further 35 Bf 109s and Fw 190s being so equipped during the early part of the year. Here, 20 radar-equipped Fw 190s were available by March 1944, with the figure rising to 48 Fw 190A-5/A-6/ A-7/A-8s by the following June. Alongside JG 300, *Neptun* aircraft are known to have been issued to NJGr 10 and NJG 11, with the latter making use of Bf 109 rather than Fw 190 platforms.



Both the *Neptun V* and production *Neptun III J* AI radars utilised *Hirschgeweihe*-style antenna arrays of the type shown here fitted to the Fw 190A-8 flown by 1./NJGr 10's Feldwebel Günther Migge from Werneuchen in 1944 (*EN Archive*)

When the rod antenna arrays were used, *Neptun* installations had 'little impact' on their hosts' performance, and in service the installation proved to be 'surprisingly easy to use'. On the downside, the pilots who used the device found that watching the radar's display robbed them of their night vision, causing targets to be lost when transitioning from a radar search to a visual one. This led to *Neptun* use being as brief as possible, and further dissatisfaction was voiced concerning the device's minimum range. While the latter is understandable, it is interesting to note that the Americans, in particular, made use of pilot-operated AI radars with some success, and without the concerns voiced by their German counterparts.

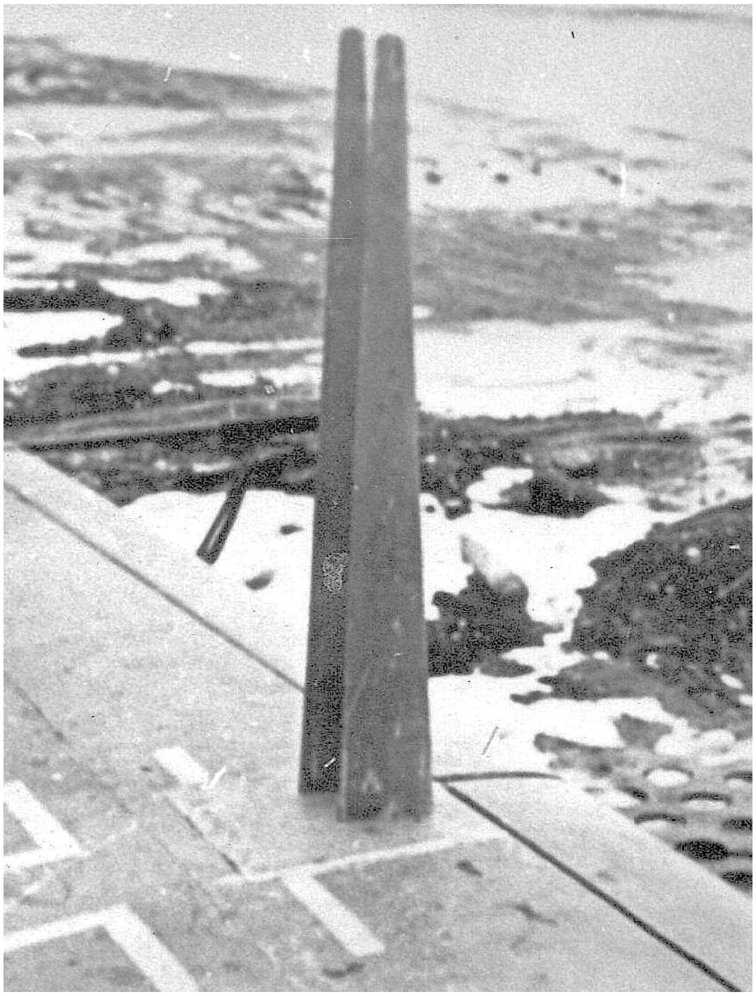
Alongside these aerial assets, *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* made extensive use of ground-based searchlights and light and radio beacons for navigation and target acquisition, together with air-to-ground/ground-to-air radio for communications and direction-finding/homing. In order, the Luftwaffe fielded four types of searchlight (designated as the 60 cm *Scheinwerfer*

Sw.36, the 150 cm Sw.34 and Sw.37 and the 200 cm Sw.43) during World War 2, of which the 60 and 150 cm equipment are described in Chapter One.

Of the four, the Sw.43 (whose design was finalised in early 1943, and which was originally known as the *Hochleistungs* (high performance) Sw.34) was the most powerful. It incorporated an automatic carbon arc lamp light source that generated a 2.7 billion candle power output. Depending on the prevailing weather conditions, Sw.43 could illuminate a target at a range of up to 13 km, and the light was configured to work with the *Übertragungsgerät* (transmission/transfer device) 37 computer that produced radar-based firing solutions for medium and heavy *Flak* batteries. Again, Sw.43 was frequently used as a 'master' searchlight for directing Sw.34 and Sw.37 batteries, and it played a significant role in *Moskito-Jagd* operations. By 1944, the Luftwaffe was able to field 6376 (5582 of which were mobile) Sw.36s, 7311 (5675 mobile) Sw.34/37s and 2262 Sw.43s.

Alongside the described searchlights, *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* operations were supported by a series of visual beacons that were designated as the *Morsekennleucht* (Morse code beacon), *Drehscheinwerfer vierblitzig* (rotating beacon with four flashing light sources) and the *Drehscheinwerfer* (rotating beacon) equipment.

In reverse order, the 'heavy' *Drehscheinwerfer vierblitzig* was carried by a box-bodied Opel Blitz 3 or Daimler-Benz 3000 Kfz. 305/32 *Leuchfeuerkraftwagen* (beacon truck) and was designed to 'enable pilots to orientate themselves over uncharted/unknown territory at night'. As such, it comprised a light alloy housing for 12 mirrored searchlights that were mounted on an electrically driven turntable that rotated at a rate of 15 revolutions per minute. In good visibility, the device had a range of up to 50–60 km, with horizontal and vertical beam spreads of seven and nine degrees, respectively. Again, the *Drehschweinwerfer vierblitzig* was mounted on a telescopic *Kurbelmast für Leuchteuer* mast which could be extended to a height of ten metres. Stabilised by guy cables, the *Drehschweinwerfer vierblitzig* could be deployed on or off its host vehicle.



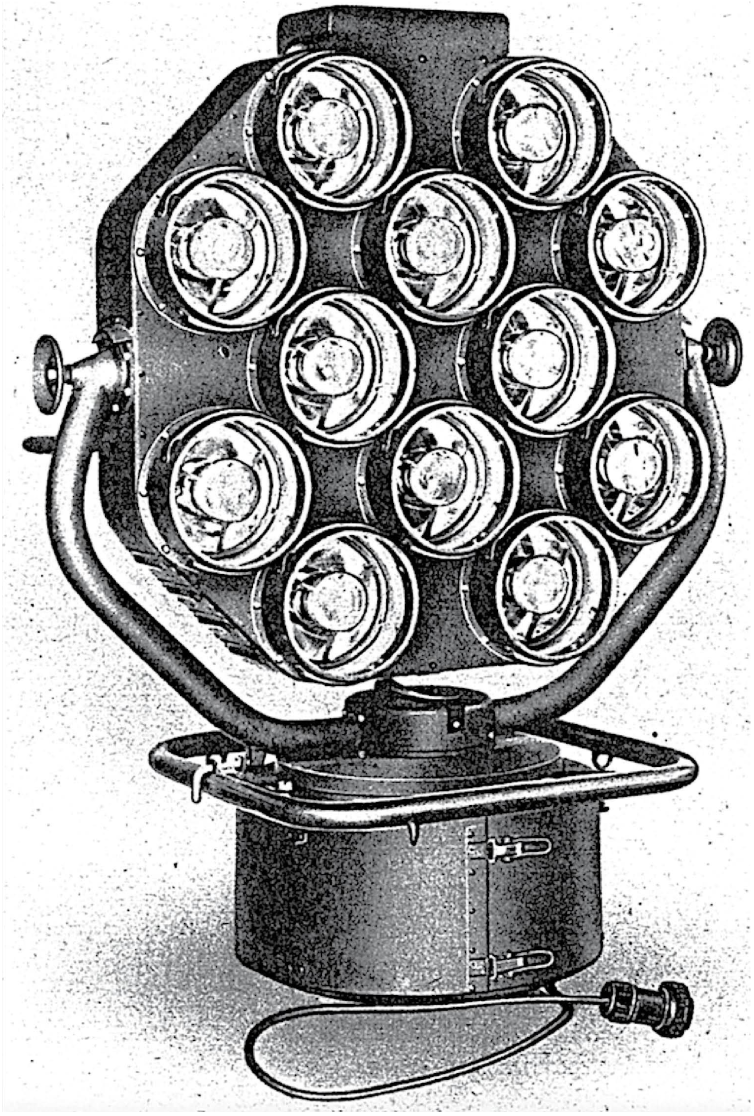
As well as a nose-mounted FuG 218 *Hirschgeweihe* array, the single-seat Me 262 V056 prototype was also fitted with two blade antennas for the FuG 226 IFF set above its port wing (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Both the *Morsekennleucht* and the *Drehscheinwerfer vierblitzig* were carried by the Kfz. 305/32. As such, the *Morsekennleucht* employed an enclosed light source that could be modulated (as its name suggests) to generate Morse ‘dots’ and ‘dashes’ and was mounted on either a *Kurbelmast* or a fixed timber support structure. For its part, the *Drehscheinwerfer vierblitzig* took the form of a mast-mounted, squared off light assembly with sources in each of its four sides. In service (and when mobile), the *Drehscheinwerfer vierblitzig* was operated by *schwer* (heavy), the *Morsekennleucht* lights by *leicht* (light) and the *Drehscheinwerfer vierblitzig* devices by *mittlere* (medium) *Leuchfeuertruppen (motorisiert)* motorised beacon troops.

Alongside these ground-based light beacons, *Wilde Sau* operations were also supported by *Flak* units firing directional tracer bursts and, in the case of the 88 mm *Flak* 18/36/37 weapons, special illuminating rounds that were used in identification sequences for specific towns or cities. The 8.8 cm *Leuchtgeschoss* (illuminated projectile) L/4.4 round has been identified as a possible candidate that was used for such purposes by '88' batteries.

Weighing 13.9 kg, the *Leuchtgeschoss* L/4.4 was a Kriegsmarine (German Navy) shell that was fitted to an appropriate 88 mm cartridge case which ejected a parachute-suspended illuminating unit at a pre-determined altitude. Examples of German cities identified in this way were Bremen (two shells, one above the other, with a 'burn' time of ten seconds), Brunswick (two shells next to each other), Kassel (three shells, one above the other) and Magdeburg (one shell).

Aerial illumination was also provided by parachute flares dropped by *Beleuchter* (illuminator) aircraft whose job it was to find, track, indicate and illuminate (with 'fighter' flares) enemy bomber streams. Regarding the nature of such flares, the US Army/Air Force TM 9-1985-2 *German Explosive Ordnance* disarmament manual lists nine such devices as follows – 1067 mm long × 193 mm diameter C 50 FA; 1080 × 203 mm single candle FB 50; 381 × 76 mm single candle LC 10; 1070 × 1070 mm LC 50 *Ausf E*; 1080 × 203 mm four-candle LC 50 F *Ausf C*; 1092 × 200 mm LC 50 F *Ausf G*; 337 × 61 mm and 483 × 86 mm single white parachute flares and a 338 × 86 mm single red parachute flare.



Among the visual beacon types used to support *Wilde Sau* operations, the *Drehscheinwerfer* (shown here) was a mast-mounted, rotating unit that incorporated 12 mirrored light sources (*Author's Collection*)

Of these, the LC 10 was carried in an ABB 500 container, while the FB 50 and LC 50 F *Ausf C* weighed in at 35 kg and were suspended from four-metre-diameter parachutes. For its part, the LC 50 *Ausf E* incorporated a 518 mm long, 11 kg candle that was hung from a one metre parachute. Elsewhere, the C 50 FA was equipped with a 559 × 102 mm candle and the ABB 500 M 10 was used to carry the 483 × 86 mm white parachute flare.

As has been indicated elsewhere, the passage of time brought about an increasing crossover between the *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* force and the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighter arm, and this was no more apparent than in their mutual use of radio beacons and the ‘running commentary’ that was broadcast to indicate the position, height and direction of flights of enemy bombers. Altogether, the Luftwaffe’s nightfighters made use of five types of radio beacon designated as the *Bruder Funkfeuer* (brother radio beacon), *Flugsicherheitsdienst* (Air Safety Service), *Große Schraube* (big screw), *Kleine Schraube* (little screw) and what the British termed as ‘central European’ transmitters.

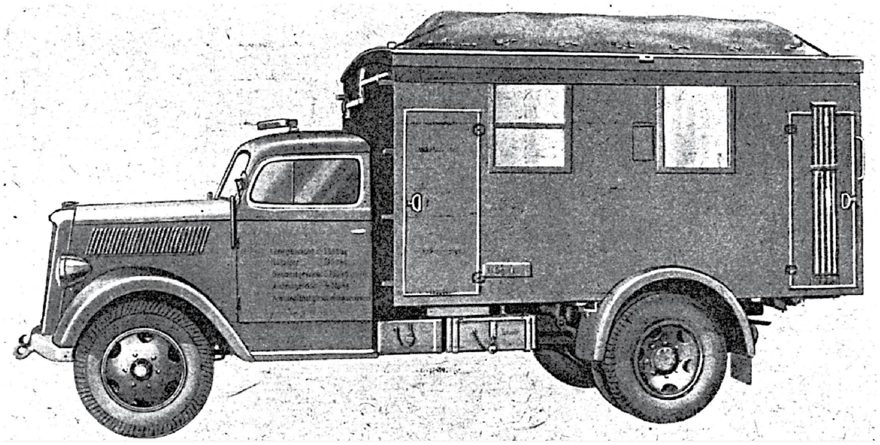
In order, the *Bruder Funkfeuer* was a low-power, fixed frequency beacon that was co-located with both the *Große Schraube* and ‘central European’ types, whose callsigns they used. Operating within the 200 kHz to 1.2 MHz band, the 50–100 W *Flugsicherheitsdienst* transmitters were allocated three-letter callsigns and were used for both navigation and as a means of transmitting wireless telegraphy (Morse, W/T) instructions to the nightfighters.

The oddly named *Große Schraube* operated in the 200–600 kHz band, had a 1–1.5 kw output and was used as a rendezvous beacon within the *Zahme Sau* system, as well as for navigation and the transmission of W/T instructions for nightfighters. *Große Schraube* beacons used frequency linked, four- or five-letter callsigns, operated on any one of 26 spot frequencies within their operating band and changed parameters twice daily. *Große Schraube* beacons were co-located with visual beacons that flashed a recognition code group.

The 50–100 W *Kleine Schraube* transmitted in the same band as the *Flugsicherheitsdienst* units and was used as (amongst other things) a rendezvous beacon within the *Himmelbett* (Heavenly or Four-Poster Bed) GCI system. As such, it operated on one of 32 spot frequencies (which were changed daily) within its frequency band, with each beacon having a fixed two-letter callsign.

Last but not least, the ‘central European’ transmitters operated in the same band as the *Große Schraube* devices, had an identical power output and used a dedicated four- or five-letter callsign that was wedded to a particular spot frequency within its operating band. Again (and like *Große Schraube*), beacons of this type were co-located with visual beacons that flashed a recognition code group.

Lest any reader should doubt the importance and complexity of the ground system that supported the *Wilde Sau* fighters, let them consider the infrastructure that was in place within a 150 km radius of Bonn-Hangelar airfield during the winter of 1943–44. Within this area there were no fewer than 16 radar stations (four ‘first order’, ten ‘second order’ and two *Eisenbahnstellung* (rail-mounted site) ‘second order’ sites). Eight surrounding airfields were equipped for night operations (Achmer, Deelen, Düsseldorf, Güttersloh, Handorf, Rhein-Main, Venlo and Volkel). There were also *Bode* (floor) and *Murg* (murmer) ‘illuminated streets’ for navigation (see **Chapter Six**), two ‘light’ radio beacon sites (*Berta* and *Philip*), seven ‘heavy’ radio beacon sites (*Achmet* (Ahmed), *Bruno*, *Ida*, *Kauz* (Little Owl), *Otto*, *Paule* and *Zita*), 20 ‘light’ visual beacon sites and 17 ‘heavy’ visual beacon sites (including *Achill* (Achilles), *Donar*, *Ida*, *Juno*, *Kastor*, *Leonidas*, *Neptun*, *Otto*, *Pollox*, *Rigoletto*, *Titus, Tosca*, *Traviata* and *Undine*).



To aid mobility, all the Luftwaffe’s visual beacons could be transported by box-bodied trucks that carried both the beacon and its telescopic mast. This contemporaneous manual illustration shows the Kfz.305/32 *Leuchfeuerkraftwagon* (beacon truck) that was associated with the *Drehscheinwerfer* equipment (*Author’s Collectio*n)

At the centre of this ever-more complex architecture was the 38.5 to 42.3/42.4 MHz band FuG 16 ZY communications transceiver that allowed a *Wilde Sau* pilot to both communicate with the outside world and receive guidance instructions and navigation directions from the ground. The transceiver provided radio telegraphy (voice, R/T) and modulated continuous wave communications, direction-finding (D/F) and homing (which required the ZVG 16 add-on) and ground station re-transmission (in applications where it was necessary for a ground station to know where a particular aircraft was). The main components of FuG 16 ZY were combined in a 14 kg, 220 (H) x 374 (L) x 212 (D) mm *Gerätblock* (device block) that combined the radio’s controls, transmitter and receiver into a single unit.

Central to the *Wilde Sau* role was the cockpit-mounted FB 16 four-button control box that allowed the pilot to select two-way R/T communications (a click stop marked with a dot), receive the *Reichs Jägerwelle* (German fighter wave) 'running commentary' (a click stop marked with a ring), utilise the *Flugsicherheitsdienst*'s D/F service (a click stop marked with a triangle) and to receive signals from W/T radio beacons (a click stop marked with a square). It is worth noting that while serving in France, I./JG 301 did not use the FuG 16 ZY's *Flugsicherheitsdienst* setting, with the relevant click stop having been removed altogether from some aircraft.

Alongside its normal anti-aircraft ammunition, the Luftwaffe's 88 mm *Flak* guns were used to fire illuminating round combinations to assist *Wilde Sau* pilots in establishing their geographical location (*Chris Goss Collection*)

CHAPTER SIX

TACTICS

From engine start to shut down, a *Wilde Sau* sortie was a tightly choreographed affair that began with a daily briefing at the particular unit's headquarters. Weather reports would be discussed, and if conditions were deemed to be favourable (JG 301 laying down a criteria of a minimum 75 m cloud base and one kilometre of visibility), the unit would determine the number of aircraft that would be available for the night's operations.

The Luftwaffe made use of so-called 'fighter flares' to both expose targets for *Wilde Sau* pilots and as a means of illuminating the tops of cloud layers. This long-exposure photograph shows such flares as light-coloured streaks or blobs (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Within a particular *Geschwader*, each of its *Staffeln* would be held at different states of readiness, with one able to take-off immediately, one at five minutes readiness and one at 15 minutes readiness. With regard to I./JG 301's *modus operandi* in France during 1944, the 15-minute rule applied, with the *Staffeln* headquarters and dispersals linked by a Tannoy system that broadcast advanced information on Allied bomber movements.

Again, the *Gruppe's* aircraft were divided into 60 per cent and 40 per cent groupings, with the former forming a first wave and the latter a second wave that could be launched as and when necessary. Here, protracted operations would see the first wave return after two hours in the air, with the second replacing them while they were on the ground re-arming and refuelling.

Alongside this division, the wider *Wilde Sau* community's pilots were also graded into those deemed able to fly in all weathers, those who were restricted to operations in certain kinds of conditions and 'freshmen' who were allowed to fly in only the best of conditions.

Take-off was initiated by the firing of two red Verey lights (a single green in the case of JG 301's French operations), with the individual aircraft taking off at approximately 30-second intervals. At this stage, the aircrafts' navigation lamps would be switched on and there would be a flare path and obstruction lights. A revolving searchlight was also frequently used as a directional and orientational aid as the fighters were climbing out. The take-off start point was indicated by white lights positioned on either side of the runway.

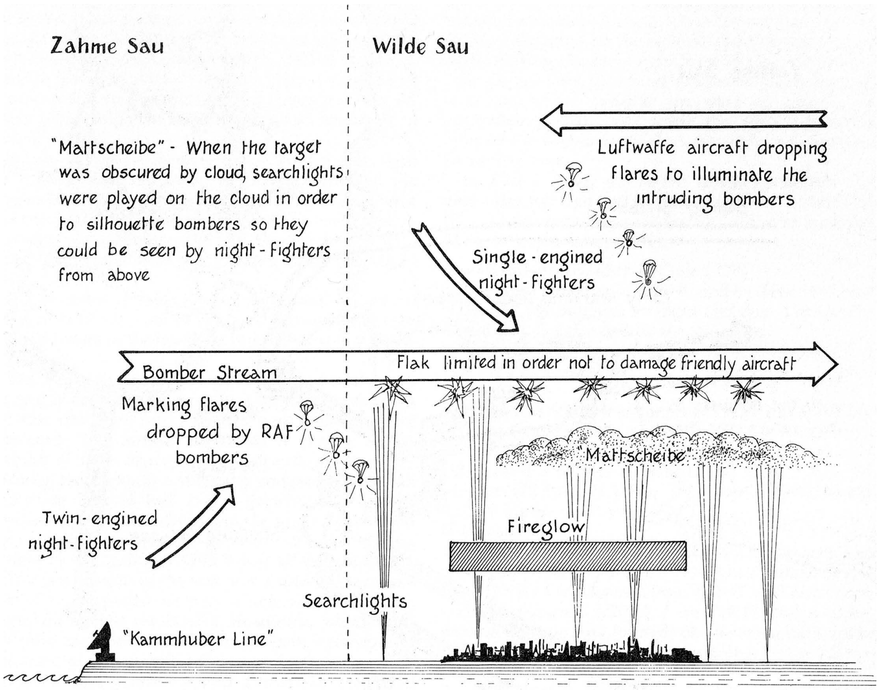
Immediately after take-off, pilots would make radio contact with their airfield's control before going over to the *Reichs Jägerwelle* 'running commentary'. Ever the odd man out, I./JG 301's procedure in France was to take off from unlit airfields, using (for whatever reason) the grass margins alongside the runway in use. Again (and rather than the *Reichs Jägerwelle*), the *Gruppe*'s 'running commentary' was provided by the headquarters of 4.*Jagddivision* under the callsign *Holzaug*e (wooden eye) 4.

Transmitted from a site in Belgium, and strong enough to break through British communications jamming, the *Holzauge* 4 commentary was used by both *Wilde Sau* aircraft and 'uncontrolled' twin-engined nightfighters. Instructions for the former were prefixed by the codeword *Taube* (dove), while those for the twin-engined aircraft were identified by animal name prefixes such as *Panther* and *Tiger*. Outside France, II. and III./JG 301 used the codenames *Eber* (boar) and *Falke* (falcon).

As should be clear from Chapter Five, great attention was paid to providing *Wilde Sau* pilots with the maximum possible number of navigation cues. Over Germany, widespread use appears to have been made of both the *Flugsicherheitsdienst* and *Kleine Schraube* W/T beacons (with JG 301 only using those beacons that were associated with the airfields on which its aircraft were attempting to land). Searchlights were used to 'wave' towards a particular airfield that was required for an emergency landing, identify particular towns and cities, provide (as already noted) directional orientation for aircraft taking off and to create what were termed as *Leuchstraßen* (illuminated streets).

Leuchstraßen could be illuminated on request to the *Flugsicherheitsdienst*, and took the form of lanes of searchlights that were spaced out at approximately 30 km intervals, were inclined outward from a central point towards their extremities and were used to indicate the direction of a night-capable airfield. In some instances, the lanes diverged to indicate a second airfield. Identified examples of such 'illuminated streets' include those that over time were codenamed *Alster* (between Stade and Lüneberg), *Bode* (floor, between Bonn-Hangelar and Handorf), *Donau* (between Wiener Neustadt and Seyring), *Eider* (between Schleswig-Land and Blankensee), *Havel* (between Briest and Werneuchen), *Lech* (between Lepheim and München-Riem), *Lehe* (fiefdom, between Oldenburg and Rotenburg), *Leine* (rope, between Langehagen and Wesendorf), *Lindwurm* 1 (Wyvern 1, southwest of Beauvais), *Lindwurm* 2 (between Melsbroek and Beauvais) and *Necker* (between Mainz-Finthen and Echterdingen).

Leuchstraßen codenames were changed at intervals, with another pair of codenames being identified as *Grün Straße* (green street) and *Rot Straße* (red street). A *Leuchstraße* featuring a revolving searchlight beacon at its centre is noted as having become operational during mid-May 1944 west of Wels between Wien and München.


Zahme Sau
Wilde Sau
"Mattscheibe" - When the target was obscured by cloud, searchlights were played on the cloud in order to silhouette bombers so they could be seen by night-fighters from above
Luftwaffe aircraft dropping flares to illuminate the intruding bombers
Single-engined night-fighters
Bomber Stream
Flak limited in order not to damage friendly aircraft
Marking flares dropped by RAF bombers
"Mattscheibe"
Fireglow
Twin-engined night-fighters
Searchlights
"Kammhuber Line"

This graphic shows the *Mattscheibe* cloud illumination technique (*Author's Collection*)

As well as providing navigational assistance, searchlights were an essential part of the *Wilde Sau* interception process. Without exception, the combination of good visibility and searchlight illumination was considered the optimum for successful *Wilde Sau* interceptions. Again, moonlight was a ‘good second’, and when conditions were not ideal and layers of cloud were present, the *Leichentuchverfahren* (shroud procedure) would be used. Here (and if the cloud layer was relatively thin), searchlights would be played on the underside of the layer to create a *Mattscheibe* (focusing screen) effect. Again, the searchlights would be used at a 30-degree angle, and the procedure created a lit background against which the enemy’s bombers could be seen. It should be noted that this technique also came to be used by the twin-engined nightfighter force.

If the cloud layer was too thick, a similar effect was created by the dropping of parachute flares, the light from which would be reflected by the top of the cloud layer and would create a background against which the fighters could see their targets. The use of these ‘fighter flares’ also gave a useful indication as to where the bomber stream was to approaching fighters. On the reverse side of the coin, any *Wilde Sau* fighter that found itself illuminated by friendly searchlights was instructed to fire off identification flares, ‘copious’ amounts of which were carried.

While complete darkness meant that there was little chance of a successful interception, the RAF bombers’ habit of liberal defensive fire frequently gave away their positions, which would not have been otherwise obvious. Once a height for the stream had been given over the ‘running commentary’, the fighters would attempt to get above it in order to silhouette targets against the various forms of described illumination, together with that from ground fires in the target area. If no artificial illumination was available, the fighters would approach the stream from below in the hope of silhouetting bombers against the always lighter night sky background.

Once an illuminated target had been found, the *Wilde Sau* fighters usually attacked in a dive from some 400 m above the target to a point below it, followed by a steep climb to within a range of 50 m, where the pilot opened fire. When using ground fire illumination, speed was of the essence, as the former provided only a short intercept window in which to complete the attack.

In terms of target types, ALL four-engined aircraft were attacked automatically, with twin-engined aircraft having to be identified as hostile before an interception took place. *Wilde Sau* pilots, however, had the reputation of shooting first and asking questions later. In the early days of the *Wilde Sau* campaign, pilots were instructed to switch on their navigation lights immediately before delivering an attack. Following the appearance of RAF Mosquito intruders, this was stopped after it was deemed to be too dangerous. The original intent had been to identify the interceptor to friendly nightfighters, and it is interesting to note that the RAF adopted a similar procedure while intercepting V1s at night during 1944.

Mention of the V1 leads neatly to JG 301's operations in defence of its ground launching sites in the Pas de Calais region of France during the same year (see **Chapter Three**). The area to be defended was demarcated by static vertical searchlights that were only illuminated when Allied bombers were attacking the launch sites and their supporting infrastructure. Again, the defensive zone was marked by nine searchlights (numbered one to nine), two of which (numbers three and five) pointed eastwards as an additional directional aid.

Overall, the zone was divided into two, with the dividing line being indicated by twin searchlights in the form of a 'V' located to the east of Abbeville in northern France. The centre of each half of the zone was indicated by a single, white-beam, revolving beacon (see **Chapter Five**). Operationally, I./JG 301's aircraft were directed to either the northern or southern halves of the zone, or, as an alternative, individual aircraft were ordered to orbit any one of the nine vertical searchlights. Elsewhere, the protection zone contained a number of dummy launch sites, with the *Flak* batteries near such sites making use of a projectile that 'realistically simulated' the exhaust flame of a V1 – a 'subterfuge which drew in many RAF bombers'.

As important as searchlight co-operation was to the *Wilde Sau* construct, co-operation with the Luftwaffe's *Flak* arm came a close second. Those *Flak* batteries defending northern France and Berlin were given a generic firing ceiling of 8000 m, above which the nightfighters operated. Pilots were usually informed of the current *Flak* ceiling by ground control using the codewords *Wellengang* (waves), *Gartenzaun* (garden fence) or *Rösselsprung* (knight's move) followed by a number to indicate the ceiling in thousands of metres.

Before attacking an enemy aircraft that was under *Flak* fire, the nightfighter would fire an identification flare which, aside from identifying it as ‘friendly’, could also give away its position to any nearby quarry. This procedure was preceded by a *Wilde Sau* aircraft that was under *Flak* fire contacting the battery command by R/T – a method that was subsequently forbidden for unknown reasons.

While the need for close co-operation between *Wilde Sau* fighters and the Luftwaffe’s *Flak* arm was a given, and much time and effort was devoted to obtaining it, from the first to the last *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* operation in 1945, ‘friendly fire’ losses were constantly high due to deviations from arrangements made by both sides. Indeed, it seems likely that most of the losses suffered by the *Wilde Sau* force while attempting to intercept bombers that were illuminated by searchlights and already under anti-aircraft fire resulted from ‘friendly fire’.

Once an operation was completed (and bearing in mind that the whole of Germany could be an operating venue), the single-engined nightfighters needed to get down as quickly (and as safely) as possible. Here, the combination of searchlights and visual and radio beacons was used for orientation and guidance, and pilots were advised (via the ‘running commentary’) that enemy activity had ceased and could be directed to land on specific airfields in order to ensure a strategic distribution of nightfighters in the event of further activity developing on the same night.

Some idea of the geographic spread of these airfields can be gained from 1.*Jagddivision* having 12 night-capable airfields (six of which were emergency landing grounds) during the summer of 1944; 2.*Jagddivision*, 12 (six for emergency use); 3.*Jagddivision*, 20 (seven for emergency use); 4.*Jagddivision*, three; and 7.*Jagddivision*, eight (five for emergency use).

Looking at the available provision in more detail, I./JG 301’s 1944 sojourn in France saw it using the three airfields at Vitry-en-Artois, Dechy and Epinoy that were each marked by a ‘revolving searchlight’ (probably a *Drehscheinwerfer* beacon) and a *Morse Doppel Kernfeuer* (double fire Morse) beacon located approximately 15 km from the particular airfield. From these, the identity of the airfield could be determined, and its bearing from these outer beacons was indicated by red and white lights that were in a line between the beacons and the airfield itself. Again, use was made of W/T beacons that were situated between five and ten kilometres from their home airfield. These appear to have been the only radio beacons used by the *Gruppe* during its stay in France.

As 1944 progressed, RAF intruders presented an ever-greater hazard to landing *Wilde Sau* aircraft, particularly as they frequently patrolled the *Leuchstraßen*, with attention being paid to their ends where they waited for the fighters as they came in to land. As a result, *Wilde Sau* aircraft ceased using their navigation lamps, while airfield obstruction, perimeter and runway lighting was subject to ever-tighter control as the intruder menace increased.

By way of example, many cases saw the visual lead-in *Lorenz* lighting being reduced to only the crossbeam immediately before the runway threshold, while the aircraft of I./JG 301 (when landing in good visibility at a home base in France) made a preliminary approach from the base's outer visual beacons along the line made by the previously described line of red and white marker lights. Reduced flare path lighting was provided as a decoy, with the actual landing being made at another part of the airfield marked out by three single red, green and white lights. Here, touchdown occurred at the red light along this line.

If a *Wilde Sau* fighter was making an emergency landing at a strange airfield, it would be provided with a reduced version of the runway lighting and the base's visual artificial horizon. In bad weather, a pilot in an emergency situation could request a position from the relevant ground control, who would D/F his aircraft and provide him with a course to the nearest suitable airfield. If there was insufficient visibility for a safe landing and/or the pilot was running out of fuel, he was instructed to bail-out. It is recorded that I./JG 301 lost several aircraft in this way during its French deployment. Again, if a particular airfield was under attack or had identified intruders in the vicinity, the *Wilde Sau* aircraft trying to land were instructed to orbit away from the area in which it was expected that the enemy intruder would turn in prior to performing its attack run.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

In the 12 months between May 1943 and May 1944, the NJVK, JG *Herrmann* and JGs 300, 301 and 302 claimed to have destroyed some 421 RAF night bombers for the loss of 100 pilots killed or injured and at least 269 of their own fighters destroyed or damaged. Again, from December 1943, JGs 300, 301 and 302 were also operating by day – operations that resulted in JG 300 claiming 158 daylight 'kills' between August 1943 and September 1944; JG 301, 17 between January and April 1944; and JG 302, 60 between January and June 1944.

These 235 victories came at a terrible price, with JG 300 losing 33 pilots killed in daylight combat between December 1943 and June 1944, JG 301 losing 21 between January and April 1944 and JG 302 losing 34 between January and June 1944. Even worse were the losses incurred in aircraft, with JG 300 losing 96 fighters that were destroyed or damaged between December 1943 and June 1944, JG 301 losing 72 between January and April 1944 and JG 302 losing 77 between January and June 1944.

These bald statistics (which, it must be emphasised, are the author's best estimates based on the latest research at the time of writing) paint a picture of the *Wilde Sau* construct being one that was both (on the surface) relatively successful and accepting of very high losses in order to achieve its aims. This said, a detailed study of these operations shows up a range of flaws in the concept, the not least of which is the fact that in the night domain at least, the three *Geschwader* did not achieve anything like the number of victories claimed. By way of illustration, the latest research suggests that of the 162 RAF aircraft claimed to have been shot down by JG 300 between 23–24 August 1943 and 22–23 May 1944, only 55 were confirmed by the Luftwaffe's own claims confirmation department. If this level of overclaiming is true and is then applied across the board, then the true figure for successes comes out nearer a total of 138 night kills between May 1943 and May 1944.

Except in a few cases, the author believes that overclaiming was not deliberate but was rather the result of the *Wilde Sau* pilots' inexperience in nightfighting (exacerbated by Herrmann's refusal to liaise with the Luftwaffe's conventional nightfighter arm) and the difficulties inherent in accurately detailing ‘kills’ which, in many cases, seem to have been rooted in the belief that firing at an enemy aircraft was enough to result in its destruction.

Again, what ‘kills’ were achieved were in the wrong place, as shooting down bombers over their targets presupposed that they had already dropped their bombs, or were in the process of doing so. In the 1940s, successful defence against aerial attacks at night required the prevention of the bombers ‘getting through’ to their targets and inflicting sufficient casualties so as to make any bombing campaign prohibitively expensive in terms of crew and aircraft losses. In this case, RAF Bomber Command would have had to consistently lose more than ten per cent of any particular raiding force before it would have had to terminate (or at least pause) its strategic campaign against the German homeland. *Wilde Sau* never achieved either of these goals.

That *Wilde Sau* operations were wasteful in both pilots’ lives and the material destruction of German fighters is beyond doubt. Operating single-engined fighters at night was difficult and dangerous – factors which when added to Herrmann’s ethos of bringing down the enemy even if the pilot had to abandon his aircraft due to fuel shortage, combat damage and/or simply getting lost, was needlessly wasteful.

This is particularly true when the extent of the support organisation that was needed to get the *Wilde Sau* pilots airborne, in a position to attack the enemy ‘like a sow protecting her young’ and then bringing them back safely to earth is realised. In fact, the ground organisation that was created to support the *Wilde Sau* fighters duplicated much of what had already been built up for the conventional twin-engined nightfighter force. When set against Herrmann’s original idea of using day fighters to complement the existing *Nachtjagdverbande*, the eventual complexity and materiel cost of the construct points to it having failed to meet its own criteria of relative simplicity.

This is not to say that everything about the *Wilde Sau* concept was a disaster. Indeed, it must be viewed as having achieved important effects despite its wasteful nature. In the first instance, the RAF’s introduction of *Window* countermeasure in July 1943 fatally compromised the radar-controlled GCI system that *General der Flieger* Kammhuber had so painstakingly built up since 1940.

While extremely difficult to deal with in the short term, *Window* was not the knockout blow that it is frequently portrayed as having been. In fact, much tactical re-evaluation had been going on in the background (particularly since the RAF had introduced the bomber 'stream' with the intention of swamping one-on-one GCI interceptions) even before the first Hamburg raid, and the Luftwaffe was already moving towards a much looser concept, namely 'pursuit' nightfighting that would see the bomber 'streams' under continual attack from ingress to egress.

What was needed was time – a prerequisite that *Wilde Sau* provided while the new form of nightfighting and the equipment to go with it could be developed and deployed. Again, the *Wilde Sau* implementation of *Objektnachtjagd* provided the new concept of *Zahme Sau* (Tame Sow) pursuit nightfighting with another tactical option to add to the pursuit and *Himmelbett* GCI techniques. Exactly which application (or applications) was to be used depended on the nature of the particular raid and/or the stage at which the combat was developing. Lastly (and perhaps most importantly), *Wilde Sau* perfected the 'running commentary' method of radio guidance that was crucial to the *Zahme Sau* technique.

This contribution to the 're-birth' of the *Nachtjagdverband* post-Window was recognised by the RAF, which stated in its 1948 staff study entitled *The Rise and Fall of the German Air Force 1933–1945* (TNA 41/10) that 'the system worked out by Oberst Herrmann provided a framework which was rapidly filled in from August 1944 onwards, with results which cannot be described as unsatisfactory; indeed, for a period it seemed as though the introduction of Window, by forcing the Germans to discard their rigid GCI system, had actually brought about an improvement in nightfighter defence. [There was] as a sequel to the introduction of Window, no noteworthy permanent decline in the loss rate to nightfighters; the overall rate of loss suffered by Bomber Command in night operations during 1943 amounted to 3.6%, of which three-quarters (i.e., 2.7%) were attributed to fighters, as compared with 4%, of which slightly more than half (2.2%) were attributed to fighters in 1942'.

More subtly, the 'daring do' exploits of the *Wilde Sau* pilots were manna from heaven for the National Socialist propaganda machine, whose lionising of the various pilots' exploits must have gone some way to fortify the morale of the German civilian population who were being subjected to increasingly ferocious and deadly attacks on their towns and cities. With the *Wilde Sau* in the air, at least someone was doing something to fight off the ‘terror’ bombers of the RAF.

If the cited British view of the *Wilde Sau* effort was surprisingly positive, what did Herrmann’s fellow Germans think of his concept? Fortunately for future historians, the transcripts of the interrogations of *General der Flieger* Josef Kammhuber (one time commander of the Luftwaffe’s dedicated nightfighting *XII Fliegerkorps*) and Generalleutnant Joseph ‘Bepo’ Schmid (variously *Kommandierender XII Fliegerkorps* and I.*Jagdkorps* and *Oberbefehlshaber Luftwaffenkommando West*) in the immediate aftermath of the German capitulation in May 1945 are available and have much to say concerning the *Wilde Sau* project.

In the order given, Kammhuber begins his account by noting that the labour-intensive nature of twin-engined nightfighter construction resulted in the *Oberbefelshaber der Luftwaffe* (Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring) personally ordering the evaluation of single-engined fighters for nightfighting, and the training of pilots to fly them. Carried out in the Köln area, this effort was apparently hampered by ‘only rather inefficient day fighter pilots’ volunteering for the role, while the ‘real experts declined to switch over’. Accordingly, it was not until the ‘jobless’ Oberst Herrmann surrounded himself with bomber pilots ‘of the same status’ (who were also presumably ‘jobless’) and use was made of the Bf 109 that the situation changed. According to Kammhuber, these second generation pilots had ‘real fighting spirit’, together with the necessary experience in night and instrument flying.

Rightly seen as the 'father' of the Luftwaffe's nightfighter arm, *General der Flieger* Josef Kammhuber (seen here at a troop review) fell from grace in the aftermath of the RAF's first use of the *Window* radar countermeasure in July 1943 (*Chris Goss Collection*)

After the introduction of *Window* in July 1943, freelance *Wilde Sau* fighting over a target 'achieved success', and the concept was a 'welcome method' of overcoming the 'stop' that had arisen in the wake of RAF Bomber Command fielding its new countermeasure. Unfortunately, Göring 'overestimated the possibilities of the [*Wilde Sau*] system', a view that led to the 'further development of the technical part of nightfighting' being neglected, with 'well-known' consequences.

Bearing in mind Herrmann's contribution to Kammhuber's removal from post, the latter's view of the *Wilde Sau* project is unexpectedly benign. Not so 'Beppo' Schmid, who had a more acerbic viewpoint. In his interrogation, Schmid stated that single-engined (*Wilde Sau*) nightfighting was 'born in an hour of distress' after heavy bomber attacks on the Ruhr valley and on Hamburg in the summer of 1943. At this time it was believed that the 'inefficiency' of the twin-engined fighters in the GCI system could be made up for by single-engined nightfighters. As a result, a 'large number of distinguished old-experienced pilots' and a 'large quantity of aircraft' were put into action, only to achieve an 'expensive success in a fight that did not pay'.

Schmid went on to suggest that it might have been considerably cheaper to have used ‘other [unspecified] methods’, and to have employed a larger number of twin-engined aircraft in a timelier manner. Warming to his subject, Schmid went on to opine that *Wilde Sau* was a ‘road strewn with heavy losses both in personnel and materiel’, and that it had eventually become apparent that while single-engined nightfighters might have been a useful complement to the twin-engined nightfighters in the role of illuminated (*helles verfahren*) target protection, they were not on their own the ‘solution [to the *Window* induced] nightfighter crisis’.

Between 1943–45, Generalleutnant Josef ‘Beppo’ Schmid (right) was successively *Kommandierender General* of the Luftwaffe’s nightfighting XII.*Fliegerkorps* and then *Oberbefehlshaber Luftwaffenkommando West*. Schmid was captured by British forces in May 1945 (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Regarding Herrmann himself, Schmid had no doubt that he had shown ‘great merit’ (by means of the ‘exceptional powers’ given to him by Göring) in setting up the first *Wilde Sau* unit within the space of six weeks. This said, Schmid believed that he had conducted his operations ‘without any regard for losses in personnel or material’. Again, no account of weather conditions or aircraft endurance was taken, with ‘if the fuel has run out and there is no possibility of landing, bail out’ being the watchword – one that resulted in the great mass of the single-engined nightfighter pilots having ‘more parachute jumps than kills on their records’.

Schmid went on to state that the *Wilde Sau* organisation was established independently of the conventional *Nachtjagdverband*, with 30.*Jagddivision* being formed alongside the existing *XII Fliegerkorps* (later I.*Jagdkorps*), and (as a result of its separateness) swallowing ‘a lot of telephone and telegraph wire, W/T transmitters, signal troops and staff personnel’ that could have been better used elsewhere.

Looking at the technique as implemented, Schmid felt that its ‘orientation, [use of] illumination and navigation aids’ was both ‘extensive and good’, and had eventually helped the twin-engined nightfighter force ‘a good deal’. Again (and while putting up a ‘splendid fight’ that achieved good results on clear nights), the *Wilde Sau* force became the ‘terror’ of the conventional nightfighters in that they fired on any aircraft with twin rudders whether friend or foe – an approach that resulted in ‘friendly fire’ losses amongst the conventional nightfighter arm. Schmid was also of the opinion that the *Wilde Sau* pilots over-claimed, with the victories attributed to the conventional nightfighters always being closer to the losses admitted by the enemy. This was not the case within the *Wilde Sau* community.

While initially made into national heroes, Schmid felt that the onset of autumn 1943 (combined with the enforcement of operations even in the ‘most critical weather conditions’) sounded the death knell for the *Wilde Sau* force, which was now losing up to 50 per cent of the fighters deployed on a particular mission for little or no success. Accordingly (and following the disbandment of 30.*Jagddivision* in the spring of 1944), the three *Wilde Sau Geschwader* had been ‘bled almost white’ by the time they were placed under Schmid’s command in I.*Jagdkorps*.

While ‘fully acknowledging’ the ‘courage and bravery’ of the *Wilde Sau* pilots, Schmid claimed that their operations had resulted in the loss of enough fighters with which to equip two day fighter *Geschwader*. In tactical terms, he went on to note that *Objektnachtjagd* was viable in 'good altitude visibility' and 'suitable illumination conditions', and that the performance of single-engined fighters was useful against aircraft such as the Mosquito. This said, he was of the belief that single-engined nightfighting could never succeed without a 'properly working scanner' – that is, an onboard AI radar.

The same round of interrogations also produced some interesting views from Generalmajor Hans-Detlef Herhuth von Rohden, who had headed up the OKL's *Abteilung* 8, its historical section. Rohden began by noting that while Herrmann's 30.*Jagddivision* was nominally subordinate to the Luftwaffe's *Befehlshaber Mitte*, in reality, it received 'special orders' directly from Göring. Again, Rohden reported that 30.*Jagddivision*'s activation was made 'in opposition' to the opinions of both *General der Flieger* Kammhuber and Generalmajor Adolf Galland (in his capacity as the Inspector General of the Luftwaffe's day fighter arm), and that due to the general lack of fighters, the Division's constituent *Geschwader* also had to operate both as day and nightfighters. This resulted in the *Wilde Sau* Division being 'worn out' by the spring of 1944, forcing its subsequent disbandment.

Interestingly, Roden also highlighted the impact of the increasing fuel shortages that Germany was experiencing on the searchlight batteries on which the *Wilde Sau* concept relied so heavily. Germany's ability to deliver electricity via its public power station network had 'diminished alarmingly', and without fuel the generators used to power the searchlights could not 'develop the current needed'.

In respect to the 'Mosquito menace', Roden was of the opinion that its 'harassing effect was remarkable', causing a fall in productivity due to continuous air raid alarms. Again, he noted that during the period September–October 1944, the 'remnants' of the single-seat nightfighter force became part of the defence of central Germany's industrial installations, factories located around Berlin and the oil plants at Pölitz and in Silesia and northern Bohemia.

With regard to *Wilde Sau*-style *Objektnachtjagd* becoming part of the conventional *Nachtjagdverband*'s tactical options, another interrogatee, Major G S Sandmann, who had been the OKL's Air Tactics Officer in its Air Defence Section, reported an example where, towards the end of the war, NJG 1 had adopted the technique over the Ruhr. The unit was forced to do so when it was no longer in receipt of adequate information from the ground radar and observer posts to allow it to pursue its normal mode of operations.

Sandmann also expressed views concerning the *Wilde Sau* adventure as a whole, characterising it as having been a ‘costly mistake’ that sent ‘inexperienced day fighter pilots’ who were ‘unacquainted with nightfighter tactics and instrument flying’ on missions for which they were completely unsuited. Equally, they were unable to receive the ‘required training’ due to the dynamic and rapidly changing environment in which they had to fight. What expertise they were able to gain was (in Sandmann’s opinion) better used in the bad weather daylight fighting role – a factor that the present author believes was one element in the decision to transfer JGs 300, 301 and 302 to the Luftwaffe’s day fighter arm in the spring of 1944.

With regard to the *Wilde Sau* force’s night-time losses, Sandmann completed his summary of events with an estimate of 60 per cent of these losses being due to bad weather and the remaining 40 per cent resulting from enemy action and/or ‘friendly fire’ incidents with the *Flak* arm.

To summarise then, the real-world *Wilde Sau* application is best regarded as not having fulfilled Herrmann’s original vision, and it was almost certainly not as successful in terms of British aircraft destroyed as it claimed. Again, *Wilde Sau* proved extremely costly in both materiel and pilots, and the increasing emphasis on *Moskito-Jagd* was equally unsuccessful. Here (and even when equipped with the fastest high-altitude models of the Bf 109 that were available, together with the jet-powered Me 262), the *Objektnachtjagd*/*Wilde Sau* units were unable to make any meaningful inroads into the RAF’s Mosquito pathfinder and Light Night Striking Force operations over Germany.

Equally (as already noted), the *Wilde Sau* force’s conversion to day fighting was, if anything, even more costly than its night operations, with JGs 300, 301 and 302 losing no fewer than 255 fighters (with a further 70 damaged) and 92 pilots killed (plus 56 wounded and nine missing in action) between December 1943 and June 1944.

On the plus side (and as already noted), the well-publicised actions of the *Wilde Sau* units are likely to have been something of a morale booster for Germany’s urban population, who were suffering ever-increasing levels of destruction in their towns and cities, and it certainly bridged the gap between the RAF’s introduction of *Window* in July 1943 and the Luftwaffe’s switch from GCI-based to *Zahme Sau*-style pursuit nightfighting in the spring of 1944.

The lessons learned were also not wasted, as *Objektnachtjagd* became an accepted part of the conventional *Nachtjagdverband*'s operations for the remainder of the war. This said, it is ironic that the wheel turned full circle, with the Luftwaffe's last *Objektnachtjagd*/*Wilde Sau* unit (NJG 11) making increasing use of AI radar-equipped aircraft (including the two-seat Me 262B-1a/U1) rather than 'simple' day fighters in the months leading up to Germany's capitulation. Indeed, it was not until the 1950s that bad weather and nightfighting single-seat interceptors became truly effective as a result of a new generation of pilot-operated AI radars.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PILOT BIOGRAPHIES

In this chapter, brief biographical details are provided for individuals who have been identified as having served with and/or held command positions within/over the various *'helle nachtjagd'*/*Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* units described in Chapters One, Two, Three, Four and Seven.

Erwin Bacsila

Hauptmann Erwin Bacsila, who was born on 27 January 1910, transferred from the Austrian Air Force to the Luftwaffe in 1938. On 1 May 1939 he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(N)/JG 2, before being transferred to *Stab*/JGr 101 four months later. Bacsila was given command of either 10. or 11.(N)/JG 2 in February 1940. He survived the war, and is credited with the destruction of up to 34 enemy aircraft.

Hans Baer

Oberleutnant Hans Baer, who was born on 29 October 1915, was *Staffelkapitän* of 12.(N)/JG 2 during April 1940. By April 1943, Baer was in command of 4./NJG 3, and he was killed in action on 20–21 December 1943 while leading II./NJG 5. At the time of his death, Baer was credited with eight aerial victories.

Karl-Heinz Becker

Feldwebel Karl-Heinz Becker was born on 30 December 1918. Posted to *Kommando Welter* during December 1944, he is credited with being one of 10./NJG 11's most successful pilots following claims for six RAF Mosquitos and a USAAF P-38 Lightning shot down at night in February–March 1945. Post-war, Becker joined West Germany's *Bundesluftwaffe* (Federal Air Force) upon its formation in January 1956.

Albert Blumensaat

Hauptmann Albert Blumensaat, born on 2 April 1902, was in command of 10.(N)/JG 131 during February 1939, followed by 10.(N)/JG 2 three months later and IV.(N)/JG 2 from February 1940. Subsequently, Blumensaat was made *Kommandeur* of I./JG 53 on 1 July 1940 and died of pneumonia on 31 March 1944. At the time of his death, Blumensaat was credited with two aerial victories.

Ernst Boenigk

Oberleutnant Ernst Boenigk was born on 7 April 1915 and transferred from the *Heer* (Army) to the Luftwaffe in November 1935. On 15 July 1939 he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(N)/JG 72, before taking over command of 9./JG 53 three months later. Boenigk survived the war and joined the *Bundesluftwaffe* in 1956.

Herbert Böttcher

Hauptmann Herbert Böttcher, born on 19 November 1913, was appointed *Kommandeur* of II./JG 2 on 1 October 1942 – by then he had claimed seven victories on the Channel Front with 9. and 6./JG 2. One year later (October 1943), Böttcher was transferred to *Stab* II./JG 77. He was involved in an accident on 9 April 1944 when his Bf 109G-6 turned over while landing at an Italian airfield. Two months later, Böttcher was transferred to NJG 101, before being made *Staffelkapitän* of 10./JG 300 during August 1944. On 24 November 1944 he was appointed *Kommandeur* of II./NJG 11, and he ended the war as acting *Staffelkapitän* of 4./NJG 11.

Conrad von Bothmer

Oberleutnant Conrad von Bothmer was born on 30 May 1913, and he was assigned to KG 26 during September 1939. On 1 July 1940 he was made commander of III./NJG 1, and later served with SKG 10.

Klaus Bretschneider

Born on 4 May 1920, Leutnant Klaus Bretschneider joined 5./JG 300 during July 1943 and moved to 6./JG 300 the following month. He appears to have commanded an experimental *Neptun* radar-equipped Fw 190 detachment during late 1943 (see **Chapter One**). Involved in a crash landing on 10–11 February 1944, Bretschneider was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 5.(*Sturm*)/JG

300 five months later. Awarded a Knight's Cross on 18 November 1944, he was killed in action on 24 December 1944 when his Fw 190A-8/R6 was shot down by a USAAF P-51 near Oberaula. At the time of his death, Bretschneider had been credited with 34 aerial victories, 14 of which were at night. Of the latter, 11 were confirmed.

Wilhelm Bürggraf

Hauptmann Wilhelm Bürggraf was born on 2 October 1914 and was *Staffelkapitän* of 3./JG 301 during March 1944. Bürggraf was wounded in action on 23 March 1944 and was appointed *Kommandeur* of I./JG 301 on 26 August 1944. He was killed in action on 21 November 1944 when his Fw 190A-9/R11 was shot down by USAAF P-51s. At the time of his death, Bürggraf claimed to have destroyed ten enemy aircraft, six of which were confirmed.

Georg (or Jorg) Czypionka (Cypionka)

Leutnant Czypionka was born on 11 March 1921 and joined the Luftwaffe in 1940. After serving as a flight instructor with FFS A/B 115, Czypionka was transferred to JG 110, before being assigned to Erg.NJGr and then to 10./JG 300. On 6 October 1944, Czypionka bailed out of his Bf 109G-14/AS during a *Moskito-Jagd* over Berlin and was thereafter transferred to *Kommando Welter*. After training on the Me 262, he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 5./NJG 11 before moving to 10./NJG 11 in January 1945. Czypionka survived the war, during which he claimed to have destroyed two enemy aircraft.

Manfred Dieterle

Oberleutnant Manfred Dieterle, who was born on 25 May 1922, served as a flight instructor at FFS A/B 72 before joining 3./JG 300 in 1943. He was wounded in action while attacking a USAAF B-17 on 16 December 1943, and survived a further combat incident on 19–20 February 1944. The following month, Dieterle was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 300, and he was wounded in action again on 7 July and 28 September 1944. On 6 November 1944, Dieterle was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 2./Erg.JG 2, before becoming the *Staffelkapitän* of 2./NJG 200 in February 1945. During his career, Dieterle claimed 13 aerial victories (all four-engined bombers), five of which were confirmed.

Helmut Eberspächer

Hauptmann Helmut Eberspächer was born on 18 November 1915, and after training as a fighter-bomber pilot he was assigned to 3./SKG 10 during May 1943. Subsequently, Eberspächer was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 4.(Erg)/SKG 10 on 26 March 1944, *Staffelkapitän* of 3./SKG 10 on 6 June 1944, *Staffelkapitän* of 2./*Nachtschlachtgeschwader* (NSG) 20 on 31 October 1944 and, finally, *Staffelkapitän* of 14./SG 151 on 20 February 1945. He is credited with having flown 170 combat missions, during which he claimed at least seven aerial victories – a figure that included three Lancasters in four minutes just before dawn on 6 June 1944.

Martin Finkeldey

Hauptmann Martin Finkeldy was born on 15 December 1913 and transferred from 1./KG 101 to 10./JG 300 in October 1944. He was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 5./NJG 11 on 5 November 1944 and then *Kommandeur* of II./NJG 11 later that same month.

One of 3./SKG 10's *Wilde Sau* luminaries, Oberleutnant Helmut Eberspächer served as its *Staffelkapitän*. He went on to command 2./NSG 20 and 14./SG 151. During his 170 combat sorties, Eberspächer claimed to have destroyed at least seven enemy aircraft, including three Lancasters in four minutes just before dawn on 6 June 1944 (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Ernst Fischer

Oberleutnant Ernst Fischer was I./JG 301's Technical Officer during February 1944, before being appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 301. On 20 February 1944 Fischer was shot down by 'friendly' *Flak*, and he was subsequently wounded in action on 6–7 June 1944 (while acting as 1./JG 301's *Staffelkapitän*) and on 7–8 July 1944 when his fighter was hit by return fire from night-flying USAAF B-26 Marauder bombers. Fischer claimed to have scored two night victories.

Wilhelm Fulda

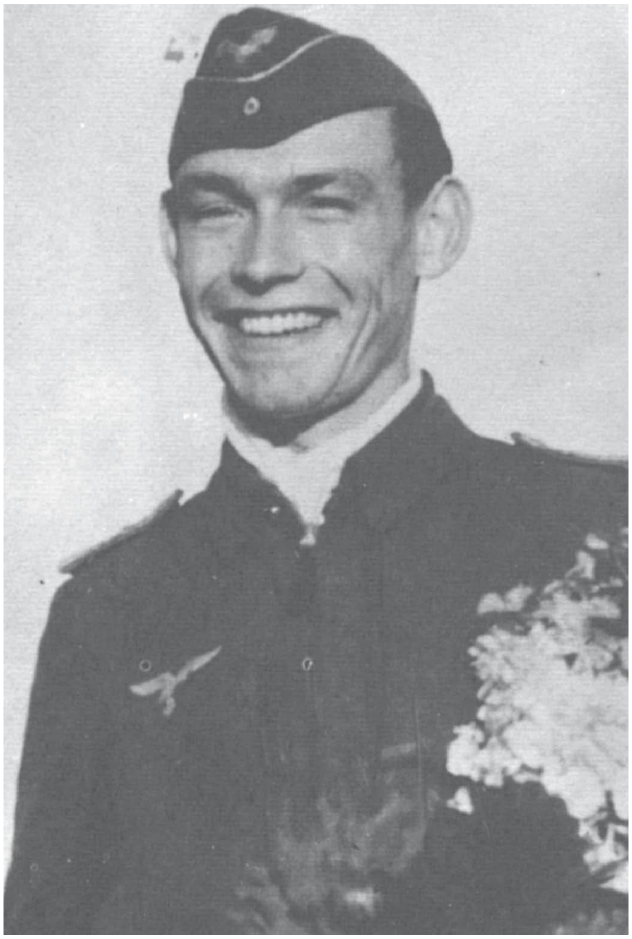
Hauptmann Wilhelm Fulda, born on 21 May 1909, was appointed *Stab*/JG 301's Technical Officer during August 1943. Thereafter, he became *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 301 on 6 November 1943 before becoming permanent *Kommandeur* of II./JG 301 the following month. Subsequently, Fulda served as *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 301 in January 1944 and then (again) *Kommandeur* of II./JG 301 from 20 April 1944. On 13 June 1944, Fulda was found guilty of indiscipline. He was sent to *Fliegerschule Gatow* for 'rehabilitation', after which he became *Staffelkapitan* of 5.(*Sturm*)/JG 4 on 12 July 1944. The following month he became *Kommandeur* of II./JG 301 for a third time, and then joined I./JG 302 in September 1944. On 1 October 1944, Fulda became *Kommandeur* of III./JG 301, before taking over the leadership of I./JG 400 in November. Despite his many command positions, Fulda only claimed one aerial victory.

Detlef Grossfüss

Leutnant Detlef Grossfüss was born on 24 November 1919 and transferred from Erg.JGr West to I./JG 2 during October 1942. By December 1943 he had claimed eight victories over France, all of them four-engined bombers. Made *Staffelkapitän* of 9./JG 2 in October 1944, Grossfüss survived the war with 20 aerial victories, seven of which (four Halifaxes, two Lancasters and a '4-motor') were at night.

Richard Heemsoth

Born on 27 February 1918, Oberfeldwebel Richard Heemsoth served with 4./JG 300 during 1943 before moving to the *Gruppe*'s 5.*Staffel* in April 1944. Following promotion, Leutnant Heemsoth was wounded in action on 25 July 1944 and then killed in action northeast of Burghofen on 11 September 1944. All five of his aerial victories with JG 300 were confirmed, and they all took the form of four-engined bombers (four of them at night).


Leutnant Hans-Joachim Heyer was amongst the pilots from II. and III./JG 54 that undertook ‘bright night’ nightfighter sorties against Soviet transport aircraft attempting to re-supply Leningrad in the summer of 1942. He was credited with six such victories between 8 and 18 June (*Tony Holmes Collection*)

Otto Heinrich

Feldwebel Otto Heinrich was born on 12 September 1920, and he served with 8./StG 77 during October 1942. Subsequently posted to 3./SKG 10, he was killed in action on 22 May 1944 when his aircraft crashed into the English Channel. At the time of his death, Heinrich claimed to have destroyed three ‘4-motors’ and a Lancaster at night.

Hans-Joachim Heyer

Leutnant Hans-Joachim Heyer was born on 20 April 1922 and was with 8./JG 54 *circa* April 1941. Heyer was wounded in action on 23 April 1942 and was subsequently killed when he was involved in a mid-air collision near

Gorodok, in the USSR, on 9 November that same year. Heyer is thought to have flown 320 combat sorties and claimed 53 aerial victories, six of which were at night (all in June 1942). He was posthumously awarded the Knight’s Cross.

Iro Ilk

Major Iro Ilk was born on 18 October 1919 and joined the Luftwaffe during the autumn of 1938. In 1941–42, Ilk was *Staffelkapitän* of 1./LG 1, and he was wounded in action when his Ju 88A-4 was downed on 18 April 1942. Six months later he was awarded a Knight’s Cross for his service as a bomber pilot. During April 1943, Ilk retrained on the Bf 109 and was assigned to JG 300 the following month. Made *Kommandeur* of III./JG 300 on 31 January 1944, he was wounded again as a result of a combat with a USAAF B-24 bomber. Ilk was killed in action in a Bf 109G-14/AS on 25 September 1944, his fighter being shot down in flames by Spitfires over Moers. At the time of his death, Ilk was credited with having flown more than 300 combat sorties. He had also claimed 11 victories, ten of them in *Wilde Sau* operations. Eight of Ilk’s successes were against four-engined bombers, with five of them being downed at night.

Major Iro Ilk received a Knight's Cross in October 1942 for his successful service flying Ju 88s with LG 1 over England, Malta and North Africa. Retrained as a *Wilde Sau* pilot in the spring of 1943, he was credited with 11 victories prior to his death in combat (*Tony Holmes Collection*)

Ewald Janssen

Major Ewald Janssen was born on 11 October 1913 and was first assigned as a Ju 87 pilot to I./StG 167 in January 1937. Following a tour with the *Legion Condor* in Spain, he became *Staffelkapitän* of 1./StG 2 in June 1941. Thereafter, he was assigned to I./JG 300 as the *Gruppe*'s *Kommandeur* on 13 June 1943. Janssen retained this post until 26 October 1943, and he was subsequently appointed *Kommodore* of JG 302 on 1 November 1943. He became provisional *Kommodore* of SG 4 on 23 June 1944, this position being made permanent on 11 September. Janssen was relieved of his command on 28 December 1944 due to SG 4's poor performance during the Ardennes

Offensive. By war’s end he had flown more than 400 operational sorties, and he was credited with having shot down two enemy aircraft at night.

Josef Kammhuber

General der Flieger Josef Kammhuber was born on 19 August 1896 and was appointed *Kommodore* of KG 51 on 21 March 1940. Following a brief period of captivity in France, he took command of KG 1 during July 1940, and on the 17th of that same month he was appointed the commanding officer of the Luftwaffe’s 1.*Nachtjagddivision* (Nightfighter Division). On 9 August 1941, Kammhuber was made *Kommandierender General* (Commanding General) of the service’s XII.*Fliegerkorps* (effectively the Luftwaffe’s nightfighter arm). On 15 September 1943, he was made *Inspekteur der Nachtjagd* (Inspector of Nightfighting) before falling from grace following the RAF’s introduction of the *Window* countermeasure (see **Chapter Two**). Thereafter, Kammhuber went on to command *Luftflotte* 5 in Norway. Having survived the war, he joined the *Bundesluftwaffe* in 1956.

Kurt Kettner

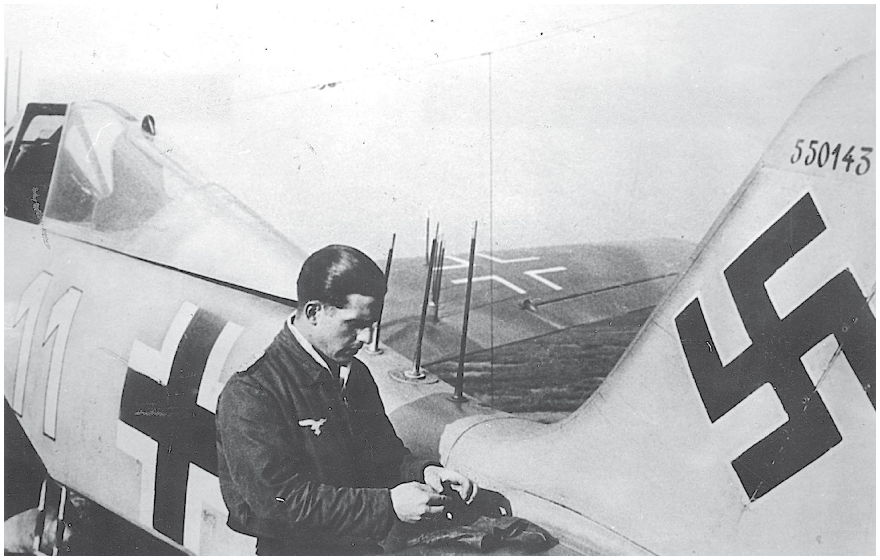
Major Kurt Kettner was transferred from KG 53 to JG *Herrmann* on 22 July 1943, and he acted as *Kommandeur* of the latter unit during the same month. On 26 September 1943, Kettner was appointed *Kommodore* of JG 300 (as JG *Herrmann* had been redesignated). He crash-landed an Fw 190A on 18–19 November 1943. Subsequently, Kettner was appointed *Kommandeur* of II./JG 5 on 20 July 1944 and was killed while flying a Bf 109G-14 on 25 August 1944. At the time of his death, he was credited with two aerial victories.

Fritz E Krause

Oberleutnant Fritz Krause, who was born on 29 February 1920, joined 1./NJGr 10 during January 1944 – he may have become the unit’s *Staffelkapitän* seven months later. Krause was forced to bail out of three aircraft between July and November 1944. Possibly appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 3./NJG 11 on 1 November 1944, he was subsequently made *Kommandeur* of III./NJG 11 on 12 January 1945 and then *Staffelkapitän* of 7./NJG 11 on 9 May 1945. Krause claimed four night victories during at least 213 combat sorties.

Emil Kriegbaum

Leutnant Emil Kriegbaum was born on 6 October 1921 and served with 7./JG 300 from April 1944. Transferred to 8./JG 300 four months later, he was killed in action on 12 November 1944 when his Bf 109G-14 was shot down by USAAF P-51s. At the time of his death, Kriegbaum had claimed three aerial victories.



During his wartime career, Oberleutnant Fritz E Krause has been variously recorded as having been *Staffelkapitän* of 1./NJGr 10 and 3./NJG 11 before becoming *Kommandeur* of III./NJG 11. He claimed at least four night victories during the course of 213 combat missions (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Werner Kucharsowsky

Oberleutnant Werner Kucharsowsky, who was born on 23 December 1917, was assigned to 9./JG 301 in January 1944. By the time he was killed in action on 20 June 1944 while flying an Fw 190A-6, he is thought to have been credited with eight confirmed aerial victories. Of these, two or three were at night.

Kurt Landl

Feldwebel Kurt Landl joined 2./JG 300 in May 1944, and he was wounded in action while flying a Bf 109G-6/U2 on 29 June 1944. Landl was killed in action while flying another Bf 109G on 7 July 1944 and at the time of his death he had six confirmed victories to his name.

Erwin Leykauf

Oberleutnant Erwin Leykauf, who was born on 22 January 1918, transferred (from 2./JG 21) to III./JG 54 on 5 July 1940 – he subsequently became an ace, with five victories, during the Battle of Britain. Moving to the Eastern Front with his unit, Leykauf was forced to make a crash landing on 6 July 1941. He was acting *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 54 during January–March 1942, with his score having increased to 15 by the spring of that year. Between 14–26 June Leykauf claimed eight victories at night – six of them came on the 22nd. Following another crash-landing, he was wounded in action on 29 September 1942. Once recovered, Leykauf served as *Staffelkapitän* of 11./JG 54 during July–December 1943. He subsequently transferred to II./JG 3, before joining Me 262-equipped JG 7 on 27 March 1945. During 551 combat sorties, Leykauf claimed 33 aerial victories (all with III./JG 54).

Alfred Lindenberger

Born on 22 April 1897, Major Alfred Lindenberger is reputed to have been one of the Luftwaffe's oldest combat pilots. Having claimed three aerial victories as a gunner with Germany's *Fliegertruppe* (Air Force) in 1917, Lindenberger retrained as a pilot and was posted to *Jagdstaffel* 2 on the Western Front in May 1918. By war's end he had increased his tally to 12, primarily while flying the Fokker D VII. Having rejoined the Luftwaffe, Lindenberger was eventually assigned to II./JG 300 in June 1944. Despite his rank, he usually flew as a wingman. Nevertheless, Lindenberger managed to claim four victories (three of which were four-engined bombers). Two of his successes came on 28 September 1944, when he downed a B-17 and a P-51 prior to being wounded by a second Mustang. Lindenberger was forced to bail out of his Fw 190A over Halberstadt. He subsequently belly-landed a second Fw 190A on 2 April 1945 following combat with another P-51. That same month, he was appointed *Kommandeur* of II./JG 300, before joining JV 44. Post-war (and at the grand old age of 48), Lindenberger demonstrated the Me 262 to his American captors.

Bernhard Mielke

Oberleutnant Bernhard Mielke was 10.(N)/ZG 26's *Staffelkapitän* during May 1939, before becoming 1.(J)/LG 2's commanding officer on 7 February

1940. Mielke was killed in action when his Bf 109E was shot down over England on 30 August 1940. At the time of his death, he had been credited with four aerial victories.

Karl Mitterdorfer

Oberleutnant Karl Mitterdorfer was born on 28 January 1921 and was with Erg.NJGr during September 1944. Later that same month he was assigned to 10./JG 300, where he remained until he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 6./NJG 11. Mitterdorfer became *Staffelkapitän* of 4./NJG 11 in February 1945, and he was credited with two confirmed victories over RAF Mosquitos.

Gustav Mohr

Leutnant Gustav Mohr, who was born on 22 March 1919, was assigned to III./JG 301 during February 1944. Wounded in action on 23–24 April 1944, he was subsequently transferred to 1./NJG 11 in September 1944. Mohr was again wounded on 12–13 December 1944 after claiming his fifth, and final, victory, and he ended the war with 3./NJG 11. All of his aerial successes (five bombers, four of them Lancasters) came while flying *Wilde Sau* missions in a Bf 109G with NJG 11 between September and December 1944.

Manfred Mössinger

Hauptmann Manfred Mössinger was born on 16 March 1914 and appointed *Kommandeur* of III./JG 301 in late October 1943. Subsequently, he became acting *Kommodore* of JG 302 between 19 November 1943 and September 1944. Thereafter, Mössinger went on to command SG 77 between 16 February and 8 May 1945.

Friedrich-Karl ‘Nasen’ Müller

Major Friedrich-Karl ‘Nasen’ Müller was born on 4 December 1911. A pre-war pilot with Lufthansa, he initially saw military service as transport pilot during the invasion of Poland. Following time as a blind-flying instructor, Müller was posted to 1./KG 50 in December 1942. In June 1943 he was transferred to the NJVK, and then enjoyed early success with JG *Herrmann* and I./JG 300. Shot down on 6–7 September after claiming a Lancaster as his

13th victory, Müller was wounded when he bailed out of an Fw 190A-6 on 22–23 October. He was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 1./JG 300 the following month, and then assumed this role for 1./NJGr 10 in May 1944. Awarded the Knight's Cross on 27 July, he was appointed *Kommandeur* of I./NJG 11 on 26 August and led the unit through to war's end. Despite flying only 53 combat sorties, Müller claimed a total of 30 night victories – all four-engined bombers, bar a single Mosquito. He rejoined Lufthansa post-war.

Herbert Nötter

Born on 26 May 1921, Hauptmann Herbert Nötter entered the Luftwaffe on 1 October 1939 and following pilot training was assigned to 10./KG 3 during the late summer of 1941. Thereafter, he served with both I. and III./KG 3, was forced to bail-out of his stricken Ju 88 in May 1944 and volunteered for fighter duties just weeks later. Following training at the Erg.NJGr, Nötter became *Kommandeur* of III./JG 300 before assuming command of II./JG 301 on 14 December 1944. Wounded in action on 31 December 1944, Nötter was seriously hurt on 11 April 1945 and succumbed to his wounds on 13 May. Prior to switching to fighters, he had flown more than 300 bomber missions.

Kurd Peters

Hauptmann (later Major) Peters was born on 7 August 1914. Appointed *Kommandeur* of II./JG 300 on 28 May 1944, he was wounded in action whilst flying an Fw 190A-7 on 29 June 1944. Peters went on to be appointed acting *Kommodore* of JG 300 in December 1944. During the course of 170 combat sorties, he claimed four aerial victories.

Kurt Peters

Not to be confused with Major Kurd Peters, Major Kurt Peters was appointed *Kommodore* of JG 302 on 2 March 1944. The author cannot find any other biographical details relating to him.

Horst Prenzel

During July 1944, Prenzel was *Staffelführer* of 1./JG 301 after the unit's *Staffelkapitän*, Oberleutnant Ernst Fischer (see earlier entry in this chapter), was wounded on the 7th–8th of the month. He was captured on 22 July when he landed his Bf 109G-6/U2/R6 by mistake at RAF Manston, in Kent. At the time of his capture, Prenzel claimed to have shot down two enemy aircraft.

Rudolf Scharfenberg

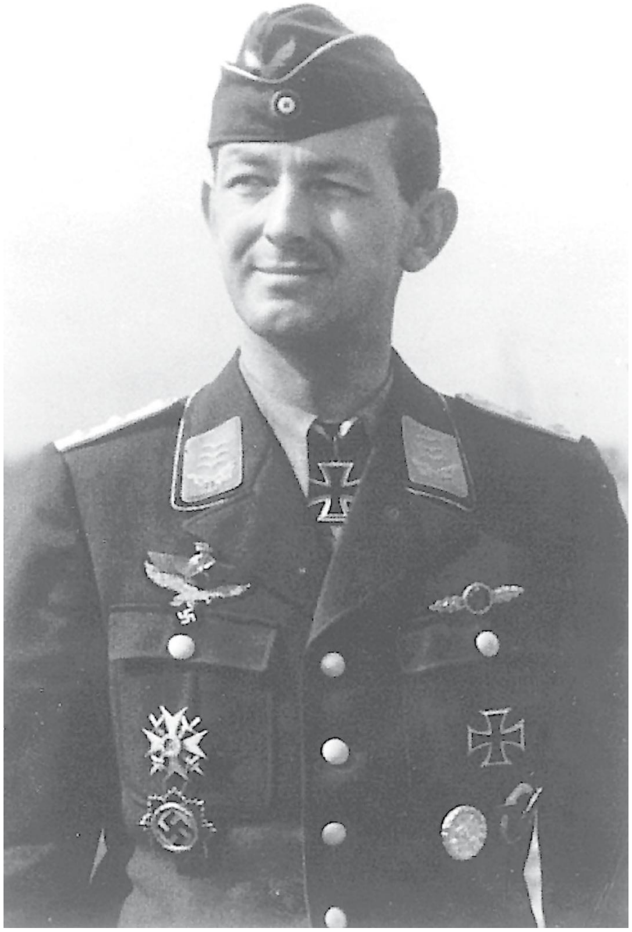
Hauptmann Rudolf Scharfenberg was born on 31 January 1915 and was transferred from flying transport aircraft to fighters during mid-1943. Assigned to JG *Herrmann*, which became JG 300, he flew with the latter unit's 5.*Staffel*. Appointed its *Staffelkapitän* on 28 May 1944. Scharfenberg was killed in action while flying an Fw 190A-8 on 18 July, moments after claiming a B-17 for his ninth victory. All of his successes were over four-engined bombers, with five being claimed during the day and four at night.

Josef 'Beppo' Schmid

Generalmajor Josef Schmid was born on 24 September 1901. After having held command positions in the Luftwaffe's 'General Göring' Division in North Africa during 1942–43, he was made provisional *Kommandierender General* of XII.*Fliegerkorps* following Kammhuber's removal (see **previously** and **Chapter Two**). On 15 October 1944, Schmid became *Oberbefehlshaber Luftwaffenkommando West* (Commander-in-Chief Luftwaffe Command West), and he was captured by the British in May 1945.

Reinhard 'Seppl' Seiler

Hauptmann (later Major) Reinhard Seiler was born on 30 August 1909. A professional soldier, he transferred to the Luftwaffe in 1935 and claimed nine victories flying the Bf 109 in Spain with the *Legion Condor*. Leading 1./JG 70 from 15 July to 31 August 1939, when it became 1./JG 54, Seiler had taken his tally to 41 by the time he was appointed *Kommandeur* of III./JG 54 on 1 October 1941 – he received a Knight's Cross two months later. Credited with 16 night victories in June 1942 on the Eastern Front, Seiler had taken his tally to 109 during the course of more than 500 combat sorties by the time he was forced to bail out of his Fw 190 with severe wounds on 6 July 1943 at the start of the Battle of Kursk. Seiler later commanded the training unit JG 104, having been deemed unfit for further combat.



One of the leading Bf 109 night aces on the Eastern Front, Hauptmann (later Major) Reinhard 'Seppl' Seiler was credited with 16 nocturnal victories in June 1942 whilst serving as *Kommandeur* of III./JG 54. Amongst the various decorations on his tunic is a 'wound badge' in silver beneath the Iron Cross on his left breast, which was normally awarded to personnel who had been wounded three or four times (*Tony Holmes Collection*)

Gerhard Stamp

Major Gerhard Stamp was born on 3 June 1920 and entered the Luftwaffe during the autumn of 1938. On 1 January 1941, he was transferred from Erg./KGr 5 to 2./LG 1 and was wounded in action while making an emergency landing in a Ju 88A-5 at Piraeus, in Greece, on 21 July 1941. Stamp remained with LG 1 until 30 March 1943, when he was transferred to a staff post. Seven months later he became *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 300, and Stamp was again wounded in action on 23–24 September 1943. He also survived another belly-landed after a dogfight with a P-51 on 29 June 1944. Following promotion, Stamp formed *Nachtjagd Erprobungskommando Me 262* (Me 262 Night-Fighting Test Unit, also known as *Kommando Stamp* which, in turn, became *Kommando Welter*, see **Chapter Two**) during November 1944. Subsequently, he was transferred to JG 7's *Stabsstaffel* in early 1945 and flew his final combat sortie on 7 May 1945. After Germany's capitulation, Stamp became a PoW under American control. He is credited as having flown at least 400 combat missions, during which he sank 35,000 gross registered tons (GRT) of shipping, damaged a further 45,000 GRT together with three cruisers and claimed five aerial victories (at least one of which was at night).

with good luck to David
from
Gerd Stamp

Major Gerhard Stamp was an ex-bomber pilot who became *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 300 during October 1943. Thereafter, he formed *Erprobungskommando Me 262* (later *Kommando Welter*) to trial the Me 262 in the nightfighter role. Stamp ended the war with the *Stabsstaffel* of JG 7. During his 400 combat sorties as both a bomber and a nightfighter pilot, he claimed the destruction of five enemy aircraft and the sinking of 35,000 GRT of shipping (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Walter Stark

Leutnant Walter Stark was *Staffelkapitän* of 1./SKG 10 until he was killed in action when his Fw 190G-8 was shot down by Allied fighters near Beuvigny, in France, on 18 June 1944. Prior to his death, Stark had claimed the destruction of two Lancasters.

Johannes 'Mäcki' Steinhoff

Oberleutnant (later Oberstleutnant) Johannes 'Mäcki' Steinhoff was born on 15 September 1913, and he transferred from the Kriegsmarine to the Luftwaffe in 1936. During late 1938, he led a provisional *Nachtjagdstaffel* within LG 1, before being made *Staffelkapitän* of 11.(N)/LG 2 the following year. On 1 September 1939, he was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(N)/JG 26, before transferring to JG 52 during 1940. A veteran of 993 combat sorties, the highly decorated Steinhoff had claimed 168 victories by the time he was gravely burnt in a take-off accident in an Me 262 from JV 44 on 18 April 1945. He duly helped with the creation of the post-war *Bundesluftwaffe*, serving in it from 1956 until his retirement in 1974.

Joachim Wandel

Hauptmann Joachim Wandel was born on 7 May 1914 and joined the Luftwaffe in 1935. Shot down and captured in Spain in May 1937 while flying Bf 109s with the *Legion Condor*, he subsequently returned to Germany and became *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 76 in March 1940. Wandel's unit was redesignated 5./JG 54 on 6 July 1940 following combat in the Battle of France. After a spell instructing at *Jagdfliegerschule Zerbst*, Wandel rejoined 5./JG 54 in February 1942 on the Eastern Front and became its *Staffelkapitän* once again two months later. He enjoyed notable success at night between 26 June and 6 August 1942, claiming 15 victories during this period. Awarded a Knight's Cross shortly thereafter, he had claimed 74 victories by the time he was killed in action on 7 October 1942.

Oberleutnant ‘Mäcki’ Steinhoff smiles at a groundcrewman who appears to have his hands rather full. The future high-scoring ace led a provisional *Nachjagdstaffel* within LG 1, before becoming *Staffelkapitän* of 11.(N)/LG 2 in 1939. On 1 September 1939 Steinhoff was appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(N)/JG 26, prior to being transferred to the Luftwaffe’s day fighter arm when he joined JG 52 in February 1940. The first two of Steinhoff’s 168 victories came with 10.(N)/JG 26 on 18 December 1939, although both of the Wellingtons he claimed that day over Heligoland Bight were shot down during the hours of daylight (*Chris Goss Collection*)

Siegfried Wegener

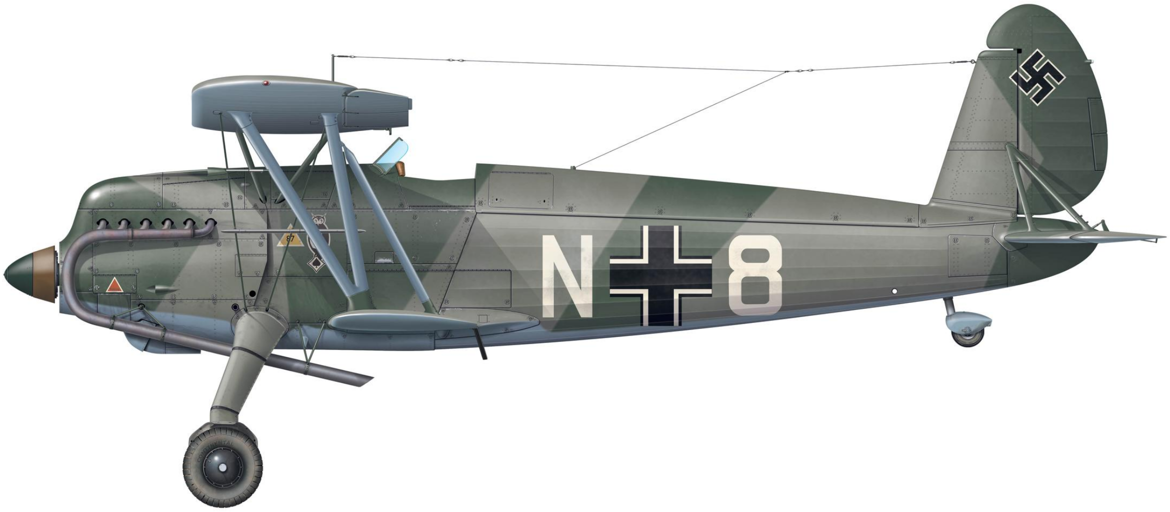
Oberleutnant (or possibly Hauptmann) Siegfried Wegener was born on 1 June 1916. A member of 3./JG *Herrmann* before becoming *Kommandeur* of III./JG 301 in November 1943, Wegener was subsequently appointed *Staffelkapitän* of 7./JG 301 on 1 January 1944, *Staffelkapitän* of 2./JG 301 on 26 August that same year and, finally *Staffelkapitän* of 13./JG 301. Credited with two night and five daylight aerial victories, he survived the war.

Heinz Wurm

Oberleutnant Heinz Wurm was born on 17 May 1917, and he was assigned to 5.*Staffel* of Ar 196-equipped *Bordfliegergruppe* (Embarked Air Group) 196 in 1943. The unit became 1./SAGr 128 (also known as 10./ZG 1) in the late spring of that year, and Wurm was made its *Staffelkapitän*. The unit operated a mixed force of Ar 196A-3 floatplanes and Fw 190A fighters, and Wurm used the latter to claim 11 enemy aircraft (including three Lancasters at night) destroyed – he had downed a Boston flying an Ar 196 in January 1943. Wurm was killed attacking a B-17 over the Bay of Biscay on 16 September 1943.

APPENDICES

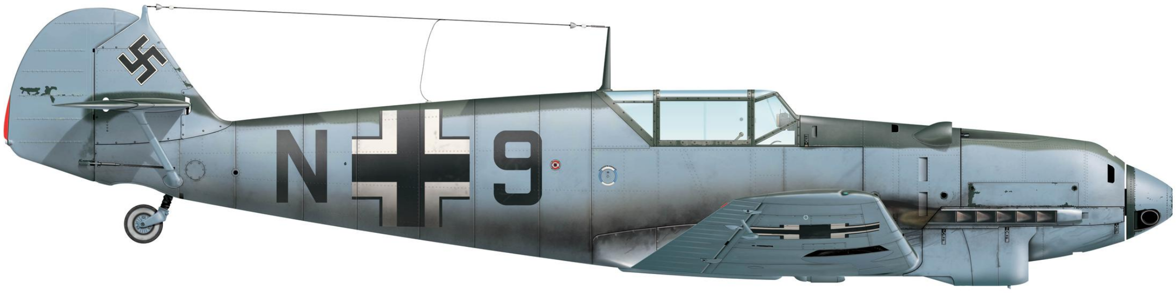
COLOUR PLATES COMMENTARY



1

Ar 68F 'White 8' of 10.(N)/JG 72, Mannheim-Sandhofen, Germany, summer–autumn 1939

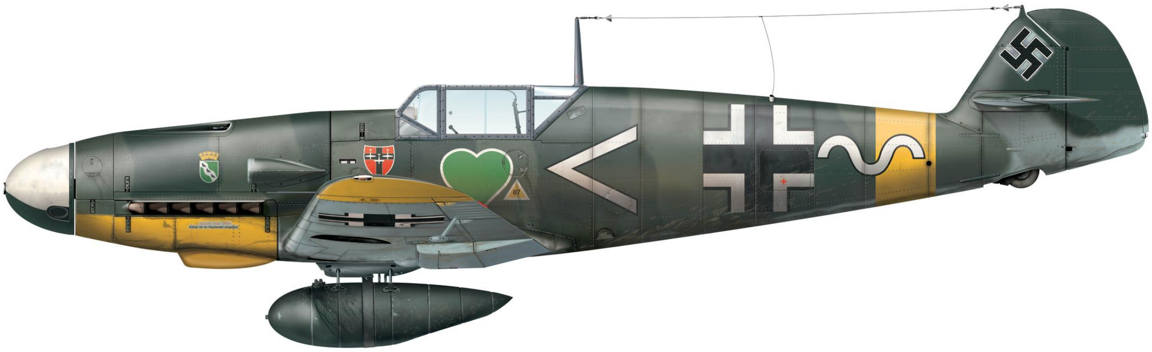
The Ar 68F was the Luftwaffe's last biplane fighter, and in the twilight of its service the aircraft was used as a first generation *helle nachtjagd* platform. Illustrated here is an example that was assigned to 10.(N)/JG 72 during the summer–autumn of 1939. The aircraft's uppersurface finish is either *Farbton 63 hellgrau* (light grey, RLM 63), with a disruptive pattern in *Farbton 70 schwarzgrün* (black green, RLM 70) or *Farbton 71 dunkelgrün* (dark green, RLM 71), or a camouflage pattern of RLM 70 or 71 over *Farbton 02 RLM-grau* (Air Ministry grey, RLM 02). 'White 8's' undersurfaces are in *Farbton 65 hellblau* (light blue, RLM 65), and it was equipped with flame-damping engine exhausts. The carriage of a *Staffel* badge is speculative.



2

Bf 109D ‘Black 9’ of 11.(N)/JG 2, Wangerooge, Germany, February 1940

11.(N)/JG 2 was formed from 10.(N)/JG 26 during February 1940. This example appears to have had its uppersurfaces finished in a plan view scheme of RLM 02 and RLM 70 or 71, with RLM 65 undersides. Some of JG 2’s *helle nachtjagd* Bf 109Ds are reported to have been flown with their cockpit canopies removed for better all-round vision.

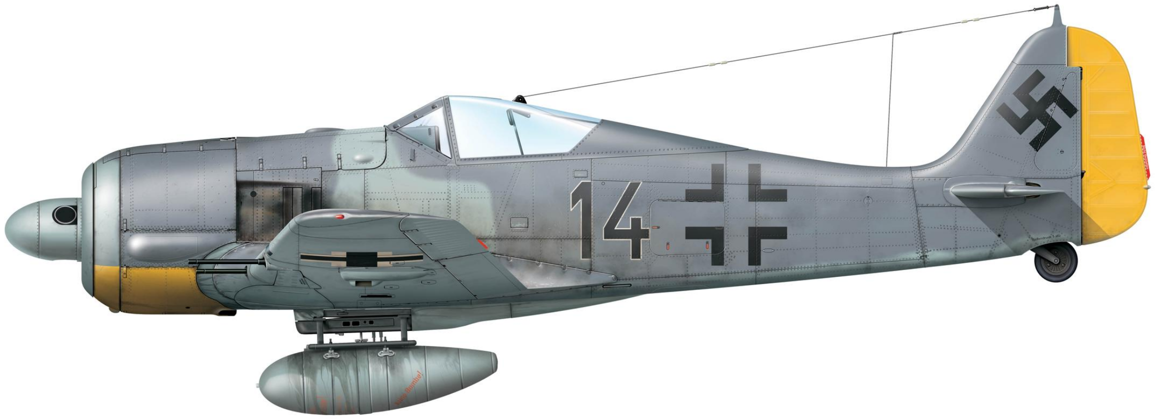


3

Bf 109F-4 ‘White Chevron’ of Leutnant Erwin Leykauf, 8./JG 54, Dno, Soviet Union, June–August 1942

During the period June to August 1942, II. and III./JG 54 flew a series of ‘bright night’ sorties over the Leningrad front in the USSR. During the course of these missions, the two *Gruppen* claimed 58 victories. Eight were credited to Leutnant Erwin Leykauf, whose Bf 109F-4 is shown here. The fighter was finished in a two-tone green and *Farbton 76 licht/graublau* (light/grey blue, RLM 76) scheme, with the uppersurface greens being sourced from either Luftwaffe or captured

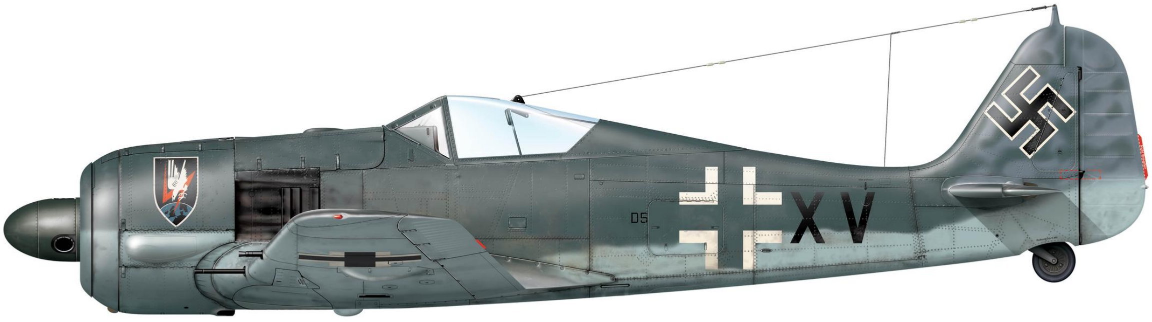
Soviet paint stocks. The fighter is marked with JG 54's *grünes Herz* (green heart) *Geschwader* badge, III./JG 54's *Gruppe* insignia and (on its engine cowl) Leykauf's own coat of arms. Other points to note are the Luftwaffe's Eastern Front *Farbton 04 gelb* (yellow, RLM 04) identification markings in the form of a rear fuselage band, under nose cowling and underside wingtips.



4

Fw 190A-4 'Black 14' of 2./JG 2, Saint-André-de-l'Eure, France, August–November 1943

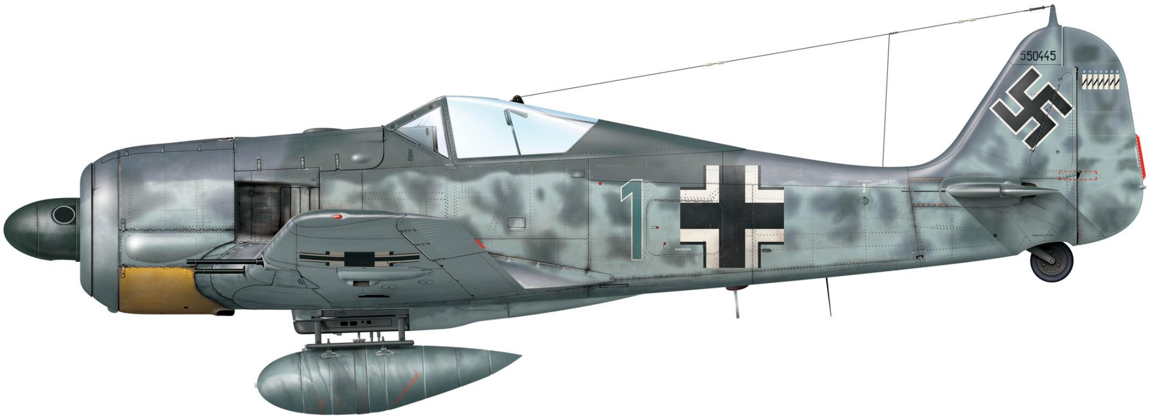
During July 1943, 2./JG 2 was re-trained for single-engined nightfighting, in which role it was operational between August–November 1943. 'Black 14' is understood to have been finished in overall RLM 76, with its fuselage, upper wing surfaces/tailplanes and fin and rudder oversprayed in what is believed to have been *Farbton 77 dunkelgrau* (dark grey, RLM 77). Also of note is the aircraft's RLM 04 rudder and under nose recognition panel which were intended to identify it as a Luftwaffe fighter to friendly forces.



5

Fw 190A-5 D5+XV of 10./NJG 3, Grove-Karup, Denmark, late 1943

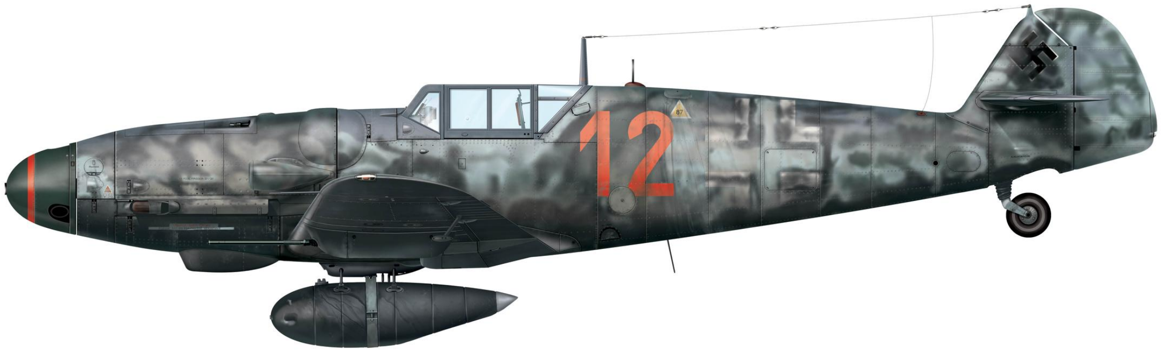
During late 1943, 10./NJG 3 operated a trio of Fw 190As in an attempt to interdict British night courier flights between Scotland and Sweden. Shown here is ‘D5+XV’, which had had most of its uppersurfaces (except for the engine cowling, which appears to have been finished in *Farbton 74 graugrün*/grey green, RLM 74) oversprayed with a solid coat of *Farbton 75 grauviolett* (grey-violet, RLM 75). ‘D5+XV’’s undersurfaces were finished in RLM 76 and its spinner was black. Note the RLM 76/75 mottled scheme on the aircraft’s fin and rudder, the small presentation of NJG 3’s ‘D5’ identification code and the application of the *Nachtjagdverband* ‘diving eagle’ badge on its nose.



6

Fw 190A-6 Wk-Nr 550445 ‘Green 1’ of Major Hans-Joachim ‘Hajo’ Herrmann, *Kommodore* of JG *Herrmann*, Bonn-Hangelar, Germany, August 1943

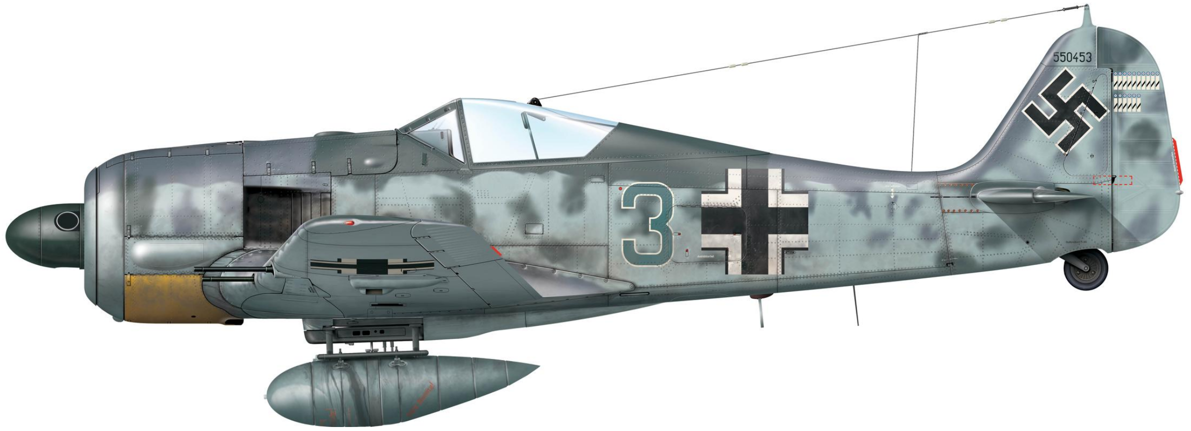
Flown by JG *Herrmann's* commanding officer, 'Hajo' Herrmann, 'Green 1' was finished in the standard Luftwaffe mid-war fighter scheme of RLM 74/75/76. Note the RLM 04 fighter identification panel beneath the aircraft's nose and Herrmann's then score of seven victories meticulously marked-up on its rudder. This aircraft was lost on the night of 23–24 August 1943 when Herrmann was forced to bail out after the fighter was fatally damaged in combat.



7

Bf 109G-6/R6 'Red 12' of Feldwebel Horst John, 2./JG 300, Bonn-Hangelar, Germany, September 1943

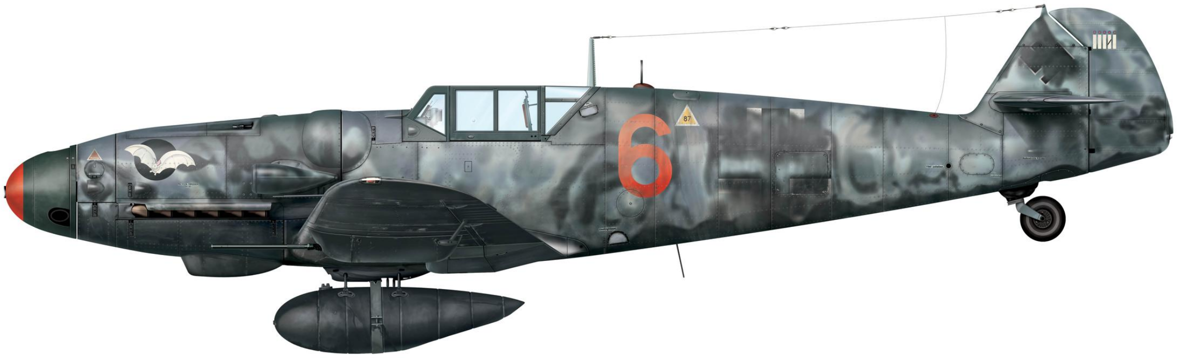
Flown by Feldwebel Horst John during September 1943, 'Red 12' exhibits a standard RLM 74/75/76 camouflage scheme that has been liberally overpainted with *Farbton 22 schwarz* (black, RLM 22). This resulted in the aircraft's undersurfaces being solid black and the crude obliteration of its national markings. Note also the thin *Farbton 23 rot* (red, RLM 23) stripe (signifying the *Geschwader's* second *Staffel*) painted around its propeller spinner.



8

Fw 190A-6 Wk-Nr 550453 ‘Green 3’ of Hauptmann Friedrich-Karl Müller, *Stab*/JG 300, Bonn-Hangelar, Germany, October 1943

Alongside Herrmann himself and individuals such as Oberleutnant Kurt Welter, Hauptmann Friedrich-Karl ‘Nasen’ Müller was one of the *Wilde Sau* organisation’s luminaries. ‘Green 3’ was flown by the then Hauptmann Müller during October 1943, and it was finished in a similar manner to his ‘boss’s’ aircraft (RLM 74/75/76) shown in Profile 6. Features of note are the RLM 04 fighter identification panel beneath the aircraft’s nose and a series of 16 victory markings indicating Müller’s score at the time on its rudder.

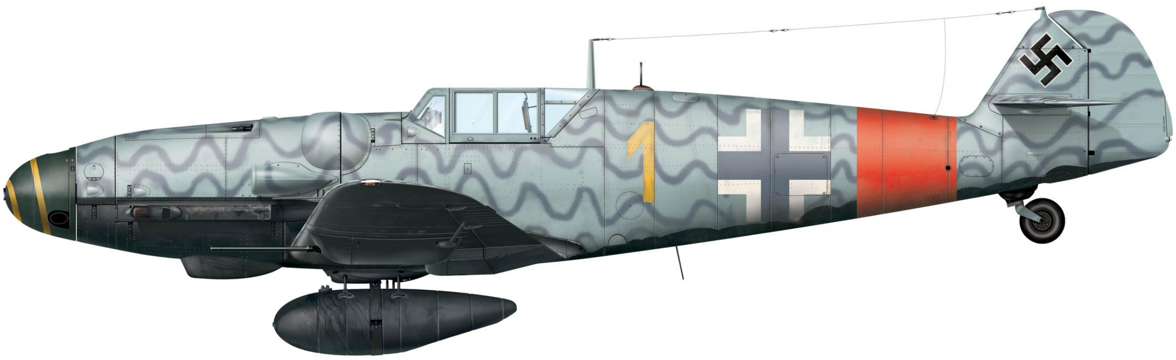


9

Bf 109G-6/R6 ‘Red 6’ of Oberfeldwebel Arnold Döring, 2./JG 300, Bonn-Hangelar, Germany, October–November 1943

Flown by Oberfeldwebel Arnold Döring during October–November 1943, ‘Red 6’ is another example of an aircraft that had its original

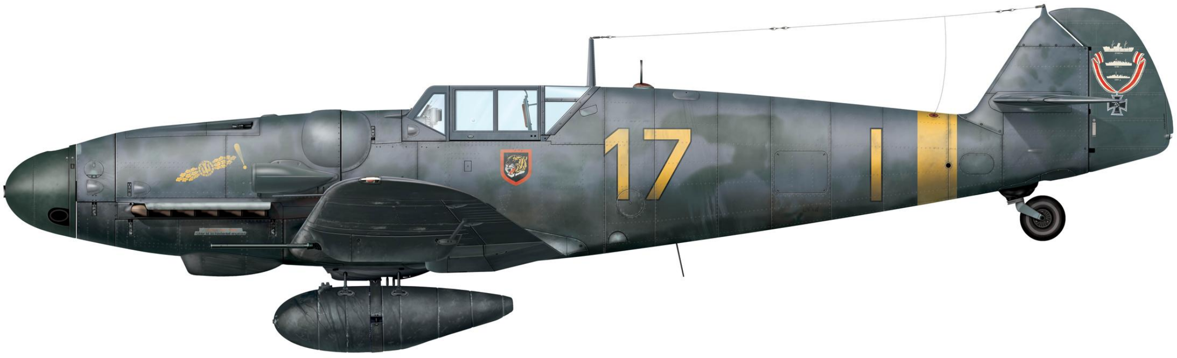
RLM 74/75/76 camouflage altered for night operations via copious overspraying with RLM 22 (see also **Profile 7**). Features of note include the propeller spinner's RLM 23 cap, the overpainting of the aircraft's national markings, the *Farbton 21 weiβ* (white, RLM 21) 'bat' insignia on the nose (thought to be 2./JG 300's badge) and the five victory bars applied to the rudder.



10

Bf 109G-6/R6 'Yellow 1' of Leutnant Manfred Dieterle, 3./JG 300, Bonn-Hangelar, Germany, March–April 1944

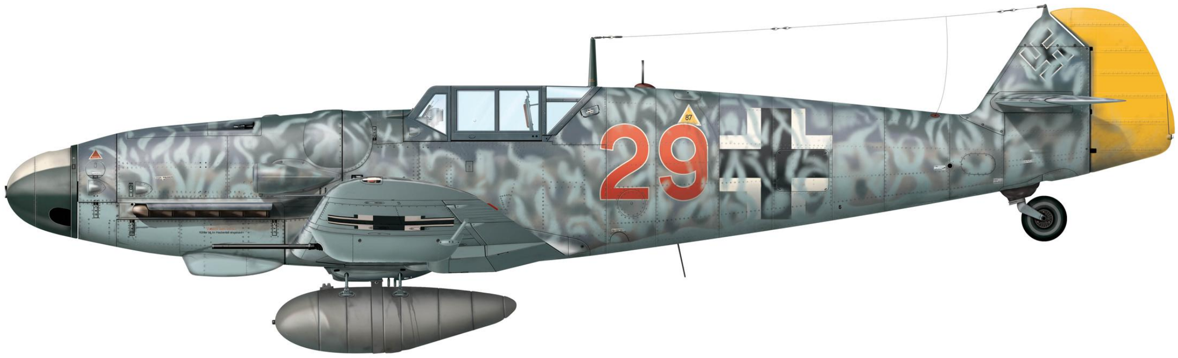
Flown by Leutnant Manfred Dieterle during March–April 1944, 'Yellow 1' exhibits one of the most attractive camouflage schemes applied to any of JG 300's aircraft. Here, the aircraft's uppersurfaces are finished in RLM 76 (with the monotone broken up by meandering lines of RLM 74 or 75) and the undersides in RLM 22. Other features of note are the RLM 04 spiral on the aircraft's propeller spinner, the glare shields fitted over the engine exhausts and the RLM 23 *Reichsluftverteidigung* band around the rear fuselage. Later, this RLM 23 band became JG 1's specific *Reichsluftverteidigung* identifier, and there is a sense that 'Yellow 1' and other Bf 109G-6s like it may have been built and painted by their manufacturer specifically for *Wilde Sau* use.



11

Bf 109G-6/R6 'Yellow 17' of Oberleutnant Gerhard Stamp, *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 300, Oldenburg, Germany, September–October 1943

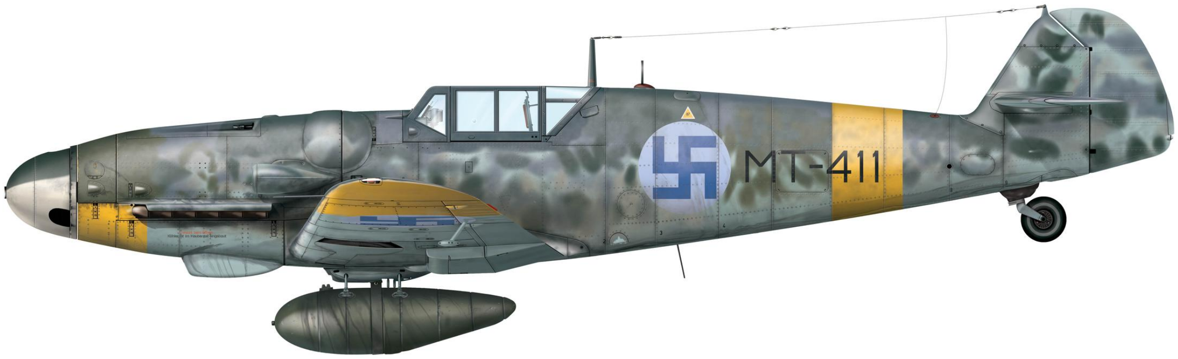
Under the *Aufsitzergruppe* construct, 'Yellow 17' (which was flown by 8./JG 300's Oberleutnant Gerhard Stamp during September–October 1943) was actually assigned to III./JG 11 in the autumn of 1943. It has an upper fuselage that is finished in a virtual monotone of either RLM 74 or 75, upper wing surfaces in either a solid grey or in the standard RLM 74/75 'splinter' scheme and undersurfaces in RLM 22. Use of a solid uppersurface colour is understood to have been a JG 11 trademark, and features to note include the *Geschwader*'s 'tiger head' insignia beneath the aircraft's cockpit, painted out national markings, an RLM 04 Luftwaffe bomber pilot's clasp on the nose, a thin RLM 04 band (possibly JG 11's *Reichsluftverteidigung* identifier) around the rear fuselage and an anti-shipping scoreboard on the rudder. Both the clasp and scoreboard denote Stamp's dislike of his *Wilde Sau* posting, and his wish to return to being a bomber pilot.



12

Bf 109G-6/R6 ‘Red 29’ of JG 302’s *Einsatzkommando Helsinki*, Helsinki-Malmi, Finland, February–May 1944

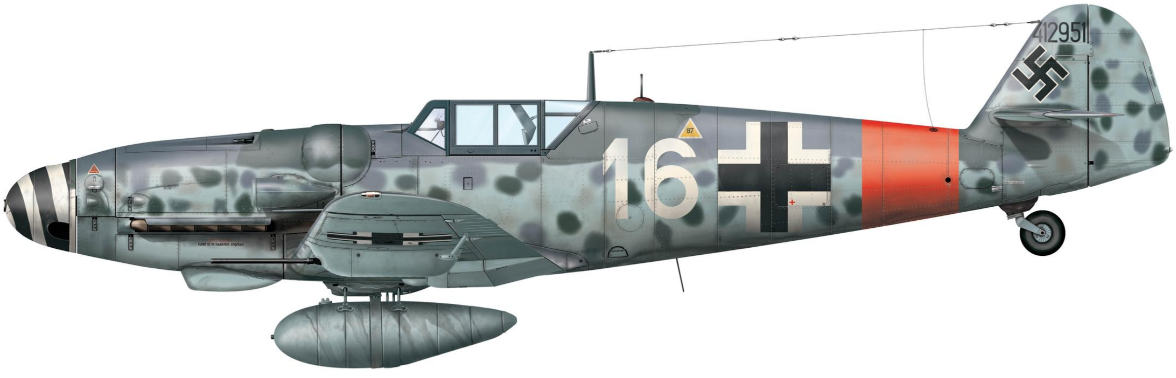
Between February–May 1944, JG 302 deployed a detachment of Bf 109s to Finland to help in the defence of that country’s towns and cities from night raids by the Soviet Air Force. ‘Red 29’ is finished in the Luftwaffe’s standard mid-war fighter scheme of RLM 74/75/76, over which flecks of either RLM 21 or 76 have been applied to provide a better winter camouflage. Again, the fighter has an RLM 04 rudder, and some of the detachment’s aircraft had the underside of their starboard wings painted RLM 22 as a visual identifier of a friendly aircraft for ground-based searchlight and *Flak* batteries. Finnish sources suggest that this aircraft’s number, ‘29’, may have been applied in black rather than red.



13

Bf 109G-6 MT-411 of 2./*Hävittäjälentolaivue* 30, Helsinki-Malmi, Finland, June 1944

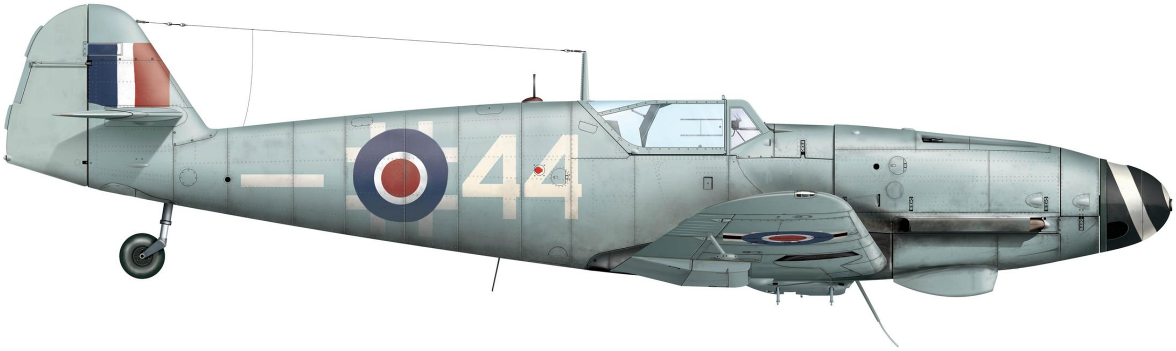
Part of *Einsatzkommando Helsinki*’s remit was to train a number of *Ilmavoimat* pilots in the art of *Wilde Sau* nightfighting. While this did not come to fruition, the Finns continued to pursue the idea, and both sent pilots to Germany for training and established a nascent nightfighter capability within HLeLv 30 during the summer of 1944. Shown here is one of HLeLv 30’s Bf 109G-6 nightfighters that was finished in the Luftwaffe’s standard RLM 74/75/76 colour scheme, enlivened by RLM 04 Eastern Front identification markings beneath the aircraft’s nose and wingtips and around its rear fuselage. It should be noted that MT-411 featured a toned-down version of the Finnish national insignia, which featured a thin wash of RLM 65 applied over the original white background portions of such markings. Post-war, the *Ilmavoimat* retained a Bf 109G-based nightfighting capability until the summer of 1949.



14

Bf 109G-6/R6 Wk-Nr 412951 ‘White 16’ of Leutnant Horst Prenzel, *Staffelführer* of 1./JG 301, Épinoy, France, July 1944

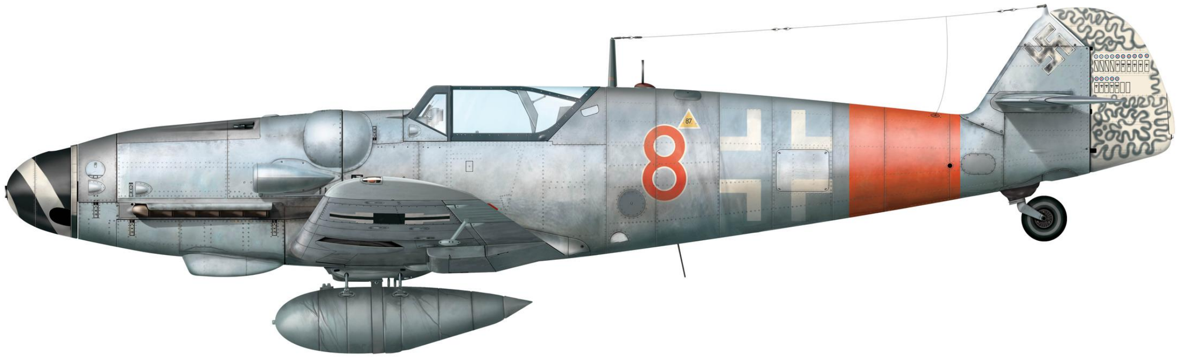
On the night of 21 July 1944, 3./JG 301’s Leutnant Horst Prenzel landed Wk-Nr 412951 by mistake at RAF Manston, in Kent, thereby presenting the British with an intact *Wilde Sau* fighter. Like many of its contemporaries, ‘White 16’ was finished in the Luftwaffe’s RLM 74/75/76 camouflage scheme, which was brightened up here by the application of an RLM 23 *Reichsluftverteidigung* band round the aircraft’s rear fuselage. Its fin and rudder configuration (the enlarged design fitted to late model Bf 109G/Ks to counteract engine torque) is noteworthy, and as TP814, ‘White 16’ was test flown by the RAF until the fighter was written off in a crash on 23 November 1944. It is also worth noting that available photographic evidence suggests the cannon gondola beneath ‘White 16’s’ starboard wing was finished in RLM 22.



15

Bf 109G-10 'White 44' formerly of II./NJG 11, Faβberg, Germany, May 1945

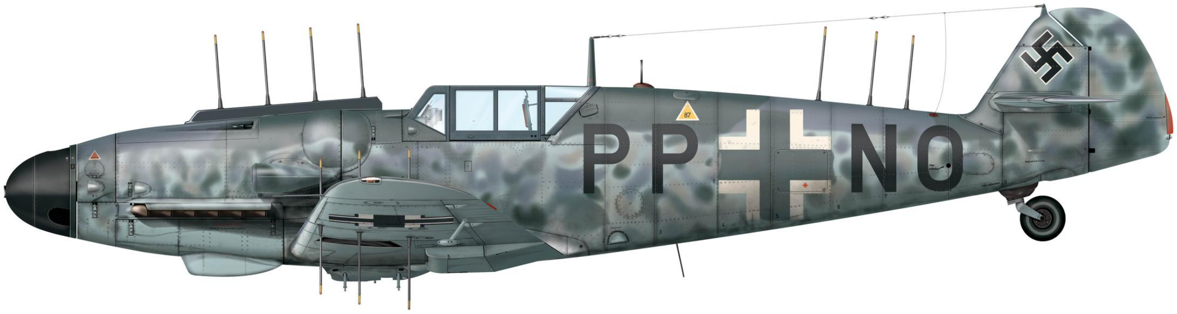
'White 44' (alongside 'White 43') was captured by the British at Faβberg in May 1945 and had RAF roundels and fin flashes hastily painted over its original national markings. Points to note are the aircraft's overall RLM 76 finish, the RLM 21 spiral on the propeller spinner, the installation of exhaust shrouds on both banks of its exhausts, the installation of a small sliding clear view panel in the port side of the *Erla-haube* canopy and the addition of a modest rearview mirror above it. British records indicate that 'White 44' was still intact in June 1945.



16

Bf 109G-6 'Red 8' of Oberleutnant Kurt Gabler, *Staffelkapitän* of 8./JG 300, Jüterbog, Germany, summer 1944

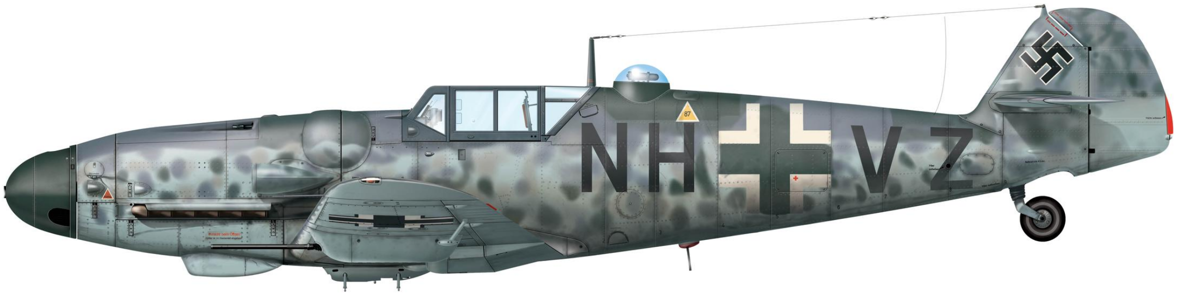
At the time it was recorded (summer 1944), 'Red 8' (which was flown by 8./JG 300's *Staffelkapitän*, Oberleutnant Kurt Gabler) had had its camouflage all but removed and the airframe polished to increase its speed. Points to note are the fighter's RLM 21 propeller spinner spiral, its rear fuselage RLM 23 *Reichsluftverteidigung* band and the white rudder emblazoned with 15 fully detailed victory markings (and two empty bars possibly for unconfirmed claims) and a dark grey meander to tone it down. Again, it is possible that 'Red 8' had white wingtips, and the aircraft represents JG 300 as it transitioned into full-time day fighting in the spring and summer of 1944. 'Red 8' is reported to have been damaged on 7 July 1944 when it was forced to belly-land following a collision with a USAAF P-38 fighter.



17

Bf 109G PP+NO, Werneuchen, Germany, circa 1944

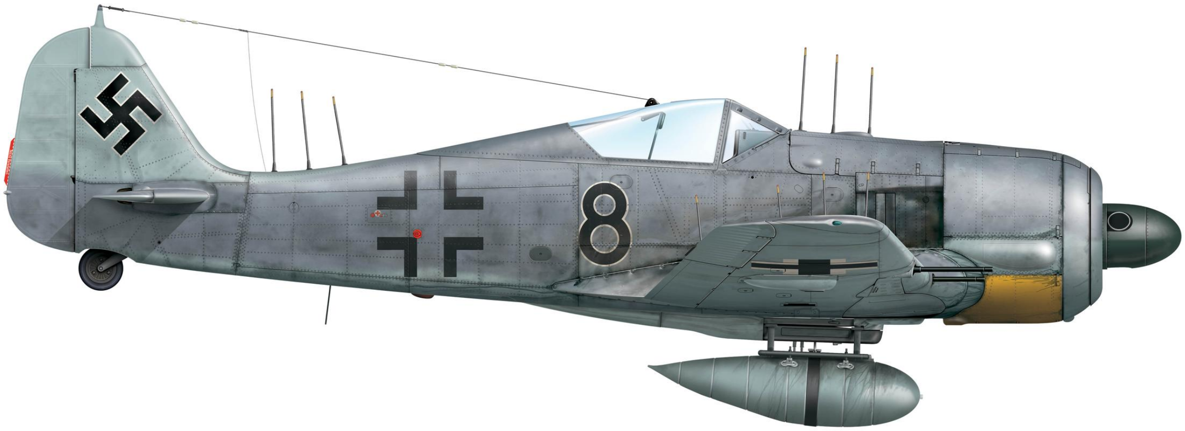
At one time in its career, Bf 109G 'PP+NO' acted as a trials aircraft for the prototype configuration of the FuG 218 V1 *Neptun III V1* AI radar. As such, it was finished in the Luftwaffe's standard mid-war fighter scheme of RLM 74/75/76. In the *Neptun III V1*'s production configuration, the radar's *Stachelschwein* antenna array (shown here) was replaced by a far simpler four-element *Hirschgeweihe* arrangement that was carried on the leading edges of the host aircraft's wings (see **Profile 21**). Of note are the RLM 04 and 23 warning stripes applied to the tips of each of the antenna rods.



18

Bf 109G NH+VZ, Werneuchen, Germany, circa 1944

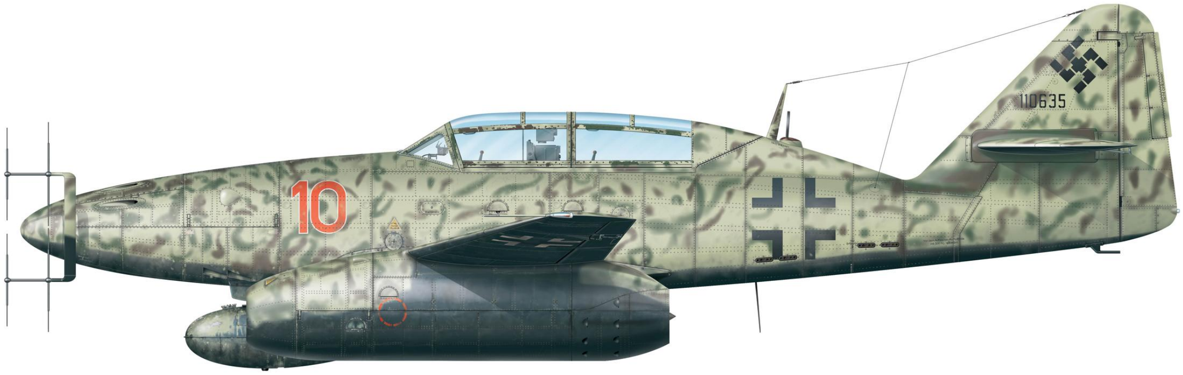
Like PP+NO, NH+VZ was a trials aircraft that was equipped with the FuG 350 *Naxos* centimetric band radar homing and warning device. Again like PP+NO, NH+VZ was finished in the RLM 74/75/76 fighter camouflage scheme, with a blister fairing for the FuG 350's rotating antenna scabbed onto its upper fuselage just aft of its cockpit.



19

Fw 190A-6 'Black 8' of 2./JG 300, Bonn-Hangelar, Germany, spring 1944

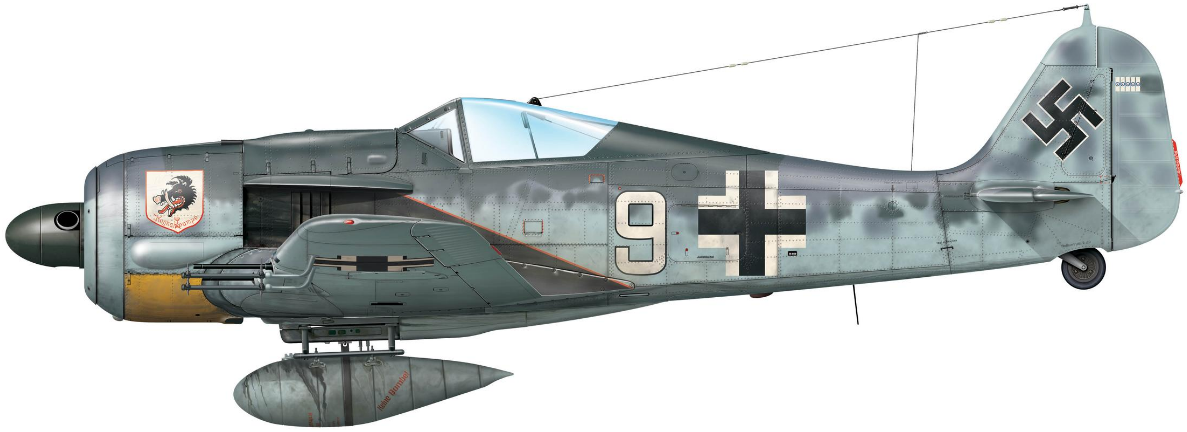
Something of a 'mystery ship', 'Black 8' has been credited as having been assigned to both JG 2 (unlikely) and JG 300, and has been portrayed in an overall RLM 76 finish that had been subject to exhaust staining and/or discoloration by dirt thrown up during take-off and landing. After researching relevant imagery, the author/illustrator team believes that, in fact, the aircraft's uppersurfaces were painted in a patchy, uniform, intermediate grey colour (possibly RLM 77), with its undersurfaces finished in RLM 76. Another interpretation might be that ‘Black 8’s’ fuselage had been sanded back to almost bare metal to enhance its speed. Other points of interest are the unusual positioning of the aircraft’s number-in-*Staffel*, its under nose RLM 04 fighter identification panel and the *Stachelschwein* antenna array for its FuG 217 J1 *Neptun II J1* AI radar. Here, the array’s rods were positioned on the aircraft’s nose (three), upper rear fuselage (three) and above each wing (four per wing), with their tips again being indicated by RLM 04 and 23 warning stripes.



20

Me 262B-1a/U1 Wk-Nr 110635 ‘Red 10’ of 10./NJG 11, Schleswig-Jagel, Germany, May 1945

With the introduction of the Me 262B-1a/U1, the *Wilde Sau*/*Objektnachtjagd* concept had come full circle and had accepted that successful nightfighting was only really possible using radar-equipped, multi-seat interceptors. In terms of its camouflage scheme, ‘Red 10’ is photographically confirmed as having had uppersurfaces that were finished in a light base coat, with the monotone broken up by mottles of a darker colour. Here, the author believes that the uppersurface base coat was applied using late-war RLM 76 with a greenish-yellowish cast, while the mottles were in either *Farbton 80 olivgrün* (olive green, RLM 80) and/or *Farbton 81 dunkelbraun* (dark brown RLM 81). The aircraft’s undersurfaces were finished in uniform RLM 22, and it is worth noting that other aircraft of this type displayed light-coloured fuselages (with darker mottling applied over the base tint), with their wing uppersurfaces, tailplanes and engine nacelle tops being painted in a solid colour. Indeed, it seems that no two examples of this type of aircraft were painted in the same way.

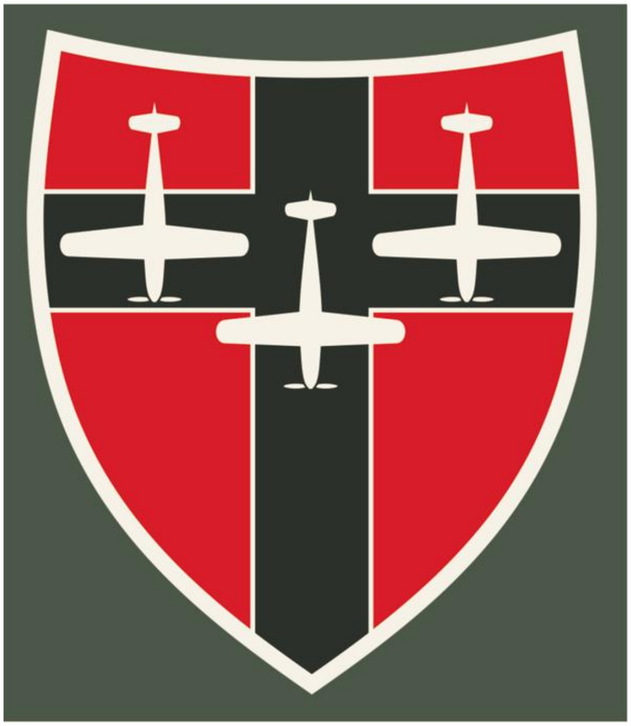


21

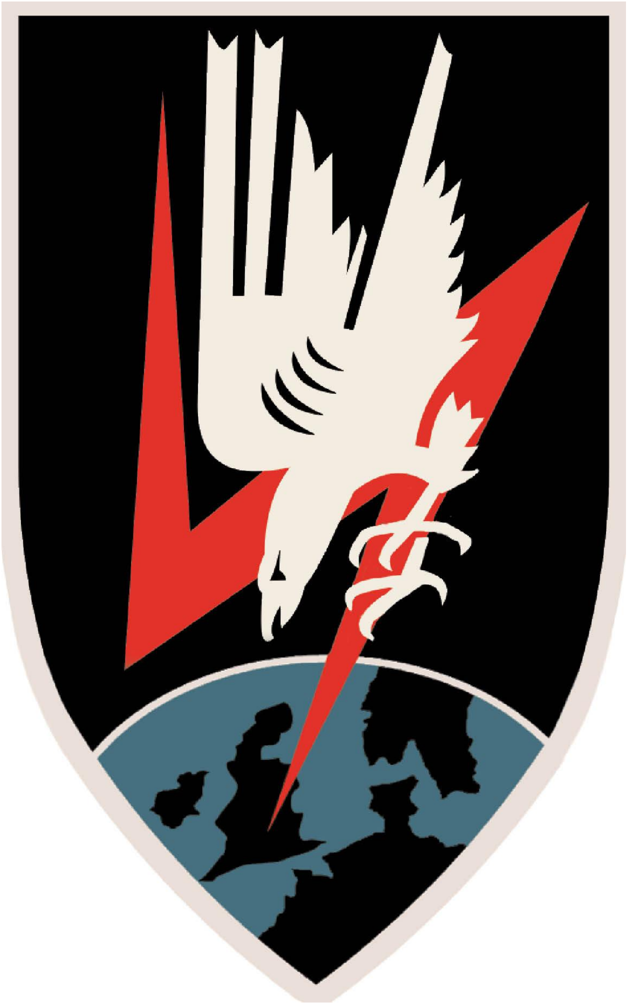
Fw 190A-8 ‘White 9’ of Feldwebel Günther Migge, 1./NJGr 10, Werneuchen, Germany, January–August 1944

Flown by Feldwebel Günther Migge, ‘White 9’ is finished in the Luftwaffe’s standard mid-war fighter scheme of RLM 74/75/76 enlivened by Migge’s own version of the *Wilde Sau* escutcheon, a stylised RLM 22 (with an RLM 23 trim) exhaust stain mask, an under-nose RLM 04 fighter identification panel and five victory bars on its rudder. Migge’s aircraft boasts glare shields over its exhaust panels, and the fighter is believed to have been fitted with the production version of the FuG 218 V1 *Neptun III V1* AI radar (see also **Profile 17**). Here, the radar’s antenna array featured two horizontally aligned dipole/reflector assemblies mounted on the leading edge of the aircraft’s port wing. A further pair of vertically aligned dipole/reflector units would have been carried on the leading edge of the starboard wing.

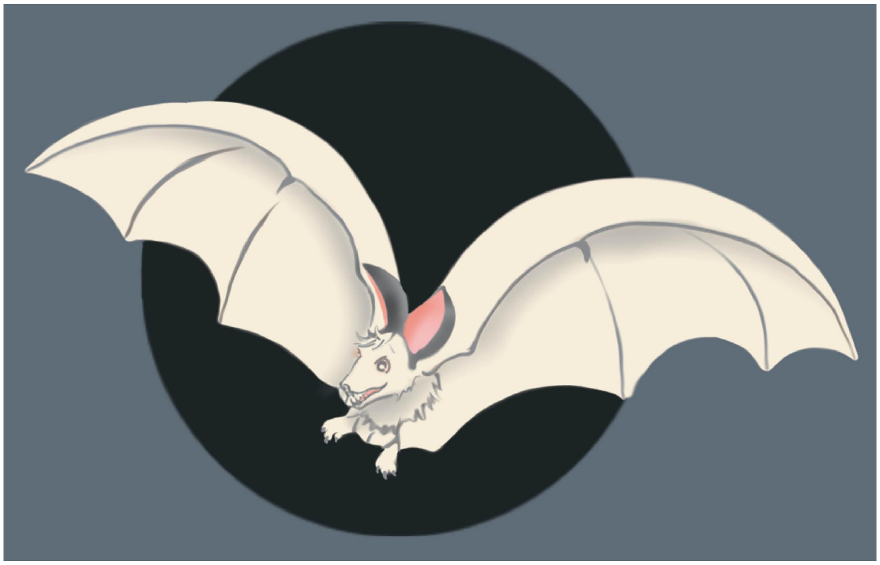
Profile 3



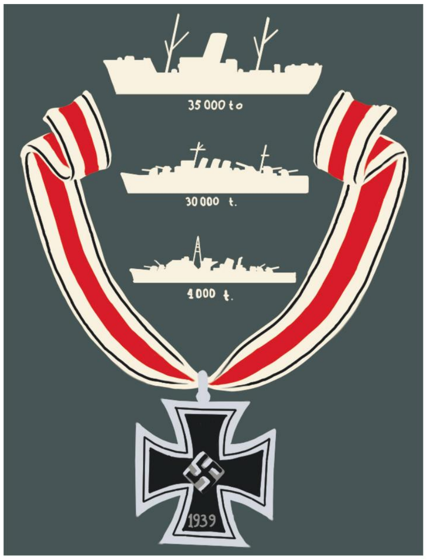
Profile 5



Profile 9



Profile 11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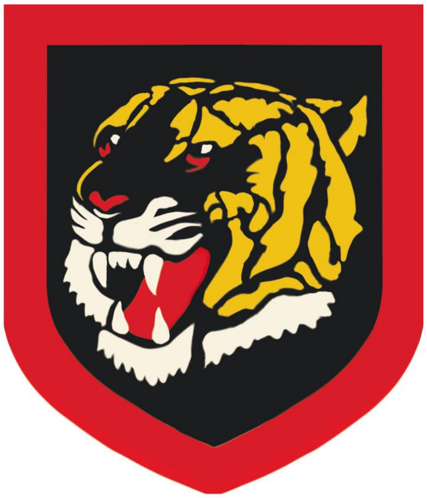
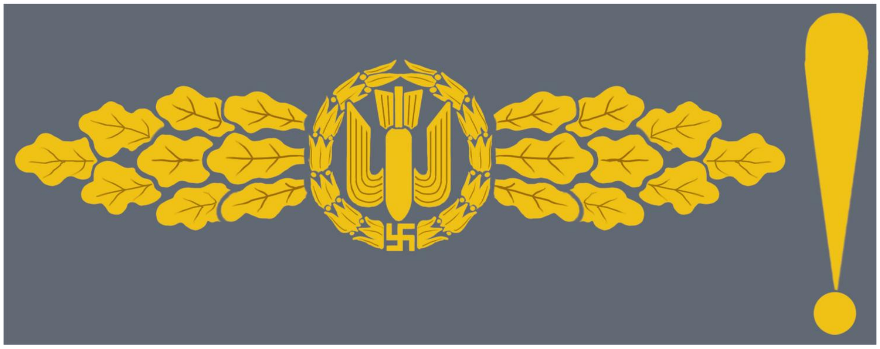
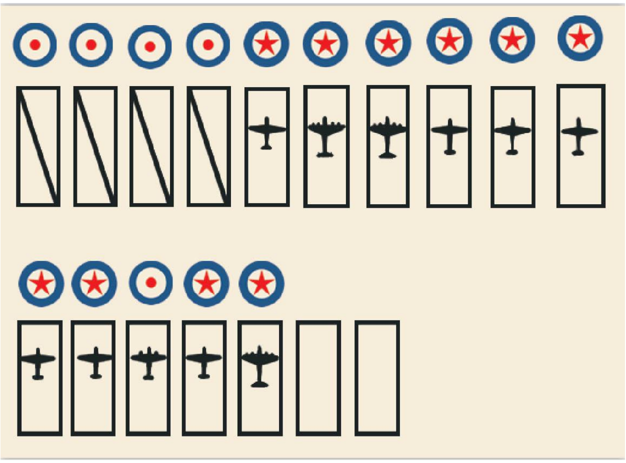
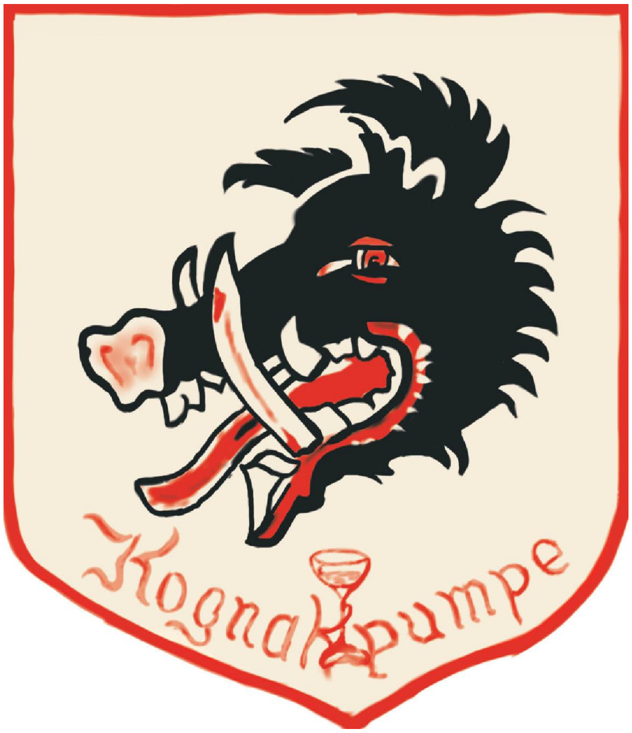




Profile 16



Profile 21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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Streetly is an author specialising in the history, technology and application of defence electronics (with a particular emphasis on Electronic Warfare [EW]) and all aspects of airborne Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR). Prior to his retirement, a 40-year career in military and aviation publishing saw Martin write five general military titles and act as a Contributing Editor/Subject Matter Expert on the *IHS Jane's C4ISR & Mission Systems – Air* directory and as the Compiler/Editor of the *Jane's Radar and Electronic Warfare Systems, IHS Jane's All the World's Aircraft – Unmanned* yearbooks and the *Jane's Electronic Mission Aircraft* bi-annual reference publication.

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Based in Poland, Janusz Światłoń has produced artwork for a variety of publications across Europe. He has also illustrated more than ten titles for Osprey. Janusz produced the profile artwork in this book.

Gareth Hector is a digital artist of international standing as well as an aviation history enthusiast. Gareth, based in Scotland, completed the cover artwork for this volume.

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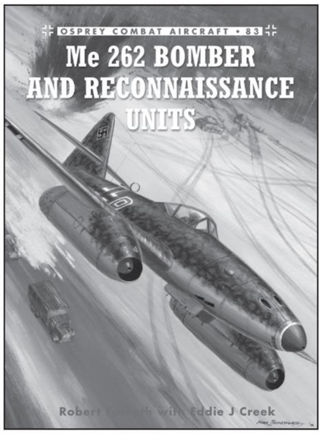
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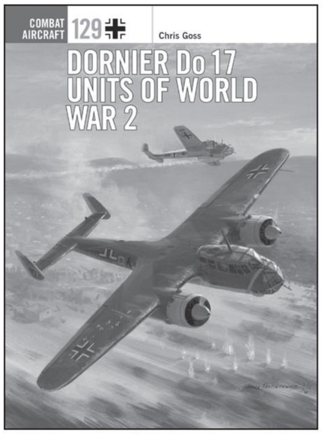
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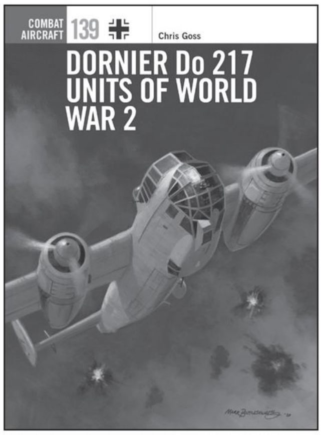
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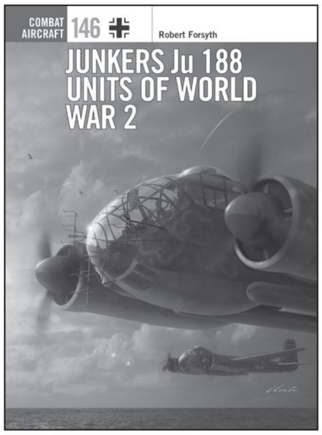
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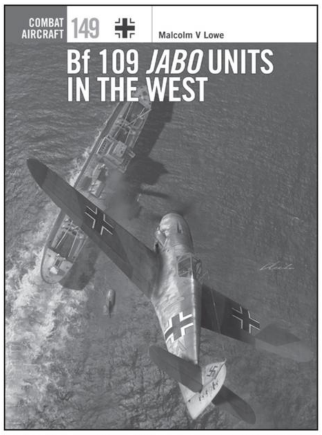
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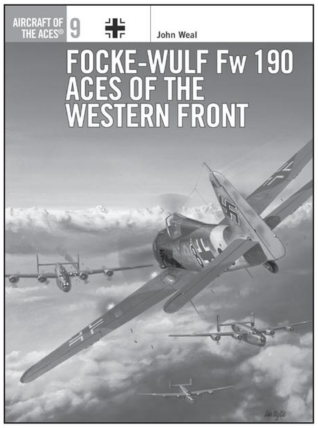
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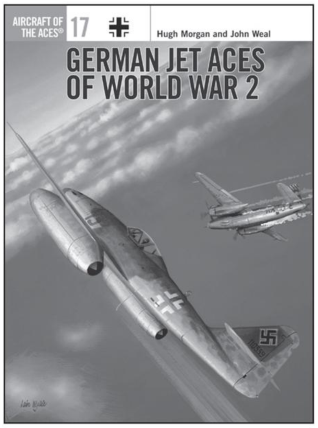
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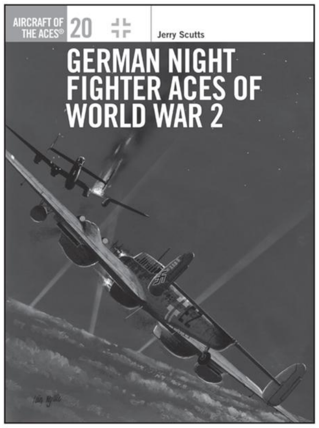
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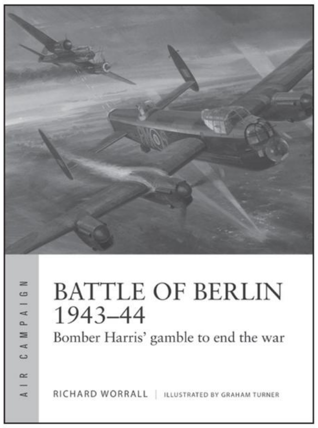
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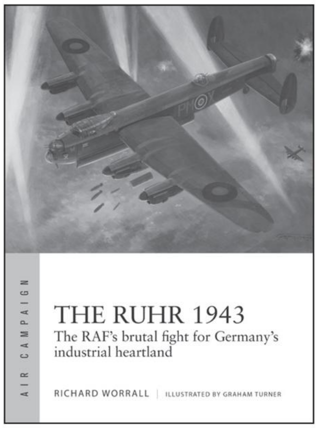
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Front Cover

On the night of 20–21 April 1943, RAF Bomber Command attacked Stettin, and despatched a force of 11 Mosquitos to bomb Berlin as a diversion. On the ground, Major Hans-Joachim 'Hajo' Herrmann was itching to try a 'live' *Wilde Sau* mission to prove his concept, and he used this diversionary strike to make his first operational sortie in the role. Scrambling from Berlin-Staaken in an Fw 190A-4, Herrmann climbed to 11,000 m and patrolled the Nauen–Potsdam area, looking for aircraft illuminated by Berlin's searchlights. Movement of a searchlight near Brandenburg caught his eye, and when three beams converged on a target, he turned towards it. At 2000 m, the 'target' resolved itself into a Mosquito flying below him. Diving on his prey, Herrmann misjudged his approach and ended up 800 m behind the bomber, which was flying at 9000 m.

Despite his height advantage, Herrmann was hardly gaining on the Mosquito, which began weaving in order to break free of the searchlights that were illuminating it and to avoid the *Flak* barrage being directed at the aircraft. At full power, Herrmann cut across one of the Mosquito's increasingly tight turns and got within firing range. When he opened fire, he remembered that his weapons had no muzzle shrouds and were loaded with normal daylight tracer rounds – he was temporarily blinded by their glare. To make things worse, his own aircraft was now illuminated, and it too came under fire from the ground.

Having regained visual contact with the still manoeuvring Mosquito, he again fired at it. Herrmann saw no strikes from his second attack, and a few seconds later the bomber had disappeared into the darkness. In the wake of this action, Herrmann realised that unmodified day fighters would need specialised provision (night tracers, for instance) to turn them into effective nightfighters. He was brought up sharply when his groundcrew told him that his aircraft had been damaged by *Flak*, having been holed ‘barely a metre’ behind its cockpit.

While Herrmann saw this mission as a learning curve, he may have been more successful than he thought, for RAF records indicate that one of the 11 Mosquitos that attacked Berlin that night ‘failed to return’ (*Cover Artwork by Gareth Hector*)

Title Page

A wonderfully evocative view of a II./JG 1 *Aufsitzergruppe* Fw 190A-5 running up its engine prior to a sortie with II./JG 300 during the late summer of 1943. (*Chris Goss Collection*)